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ON THE COVER: Jamie Lee Curtis photographed by Andrew Eccles in Los Angeles on April 8, 2025. Producer: Cat Cook Knox; wardrobe stylist: Jane Ross; hair stylist: Sean James/Aim Artists; makeup artist: Grace Ahn/Day One Studio; prop stylist: James Lear/11th House Agency. Inset: Liubomir Paut/Getty Images

FLIP THE MAGAZINE OVER!

TECH TOOLS JUST FOR YOU

An AARP guide to using the latest technology to simplify your life

- **CONNECT** Strengthen personal bonds, make new friends.
- **TRY A CHATBOT** Use AI to improve your health and well-being.
- **ASK US** Get advice from our "techsperts."

Photo and illustration credits on page 73

Robert Love EDITOR IN CHIEF

Volunteers for America

They are the backbone of AARP's important work

The red shirts are here: out in the streets, standing up for you.

YOU WILL have no trouble recognizing them. They'll be there when they're needed, in goodly numbers and bright red T-shirts, ready to fight for your interests. Who's this "they"? AARP's volunteers, who every day fan out across America, flooding the zone with calls, letters and visits to legislators when Social Security or Medicare is threatened, clearing the portals of progress for all Americans 50-plus.

AARP and AARP Foundation volunteers make a difference, and we have the receipts: They donate 9 million hours a year and save older Americans more than $1 billion a year through education, driver safety, fraud prevention and tax assistance.

Take fraud against older adults: It's constant and massive, as much as $61.5 billion a year in losses, says the FTC. If you become the victim of a scam—or think you have—the AARP Fraud Watch Network offers trained volunteers to assist, whether you need emotional support or practical advice. Visit aarp.org/fraudfighters to find out more.

Volunteer instructors help drivers stay safe on the road (and save on insurance) with AARP's award-winning Smart Driver course. Visit aarp.org/drivervolunteer to sign up to teach. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, the largest free volunteer-based tax prep service in the country, trains and certifies volunteers to help older adults with low to moderate incomes complete and file their tax returns. Go to aarp.org/taxhelpers to get involved.

And there's AARP Foundation Experience Corps, which trains volunteers over 50 to tutor elementary schoolers. It operates in 18 communities across the United States, and they're looking for volunteers in all of them. Visit aarpfoundation.org/experiencecorps for information.

Till now, I have focused my AARP-related energies on my job, but that's about to change (see "A Fond Farewell," below). So if you come across a group of red-shirted AARP volunteers and notice my familiar face, come say hello!

My first cover, *from left*: Morgan Freeman, Michael Douglas, me, Robert De Niro and Kevin Kline

A Fond Farewell

AFTER 12 YEARS of editing this magazine—and its sister publication, the *AARP Bulletin*—I am stepping away to take on other challenges.

Since 2013, I have had the privilege of leading a dedicated team of editors in our mission to deliver first-class journalism, from the latest news on health and personal finance to important, deeply reported stories. At *Rolling Stone*, where I began my long, strange trip into the heart of journalism, we saw the world through the lens of youth. In these pages, we reflect the world of Americans 50-plus, their wishes, hopes and dreams. And I have taken our message to heart: For me, and no doubt for you, the best is yet to come.

So I want to thank you, dear reader, for letting me know when we were hitting the mark and when we missed. It has been a pleasure curating this wonderful, unique magazine, designed and produced specifically for older Americans. The numbers suggest that I am leaving it to my colleagues in good shape. *AARP The Magazine* has maintained industry-high reader satisfaction scores for some time now (as has the *Bulletin*). You are holding in your hand the No. 1 magazine in the U.S. for seven years running, with the largest circulation and the biggest readership, at 38.9 million readers per issue.

And did I say it has been fun? I got to spend time with some of my heroes, including Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and Helen Mirren. I interviewed officials who set the agenda for our country, including Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden and Donald Trump (twice).

Now I'll be looking for ways to stay engaged with you and the association as it continues to fight for what we all believe in—a better future for all.

Bob

Clockwise from bottom left: Art Streiber; Susannah Kay; Zelman Studios Inc. (3)

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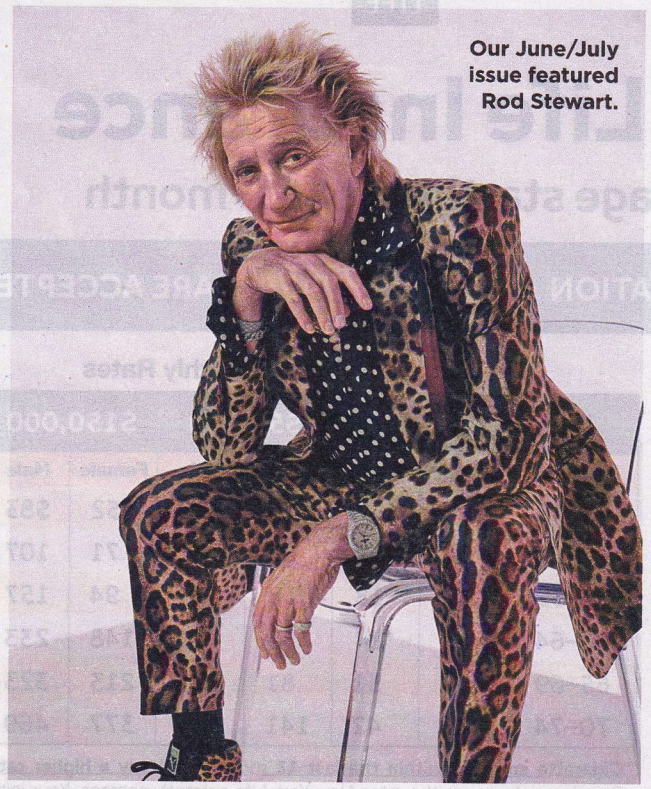

Our June/July issue featured Rod Stewart.

ROD RAVES & RAILS

Thank you for the weeklong earworm you've given me with your cover story on Rod Stewart ["Do Ya (Still) Think I'm Sexy?"]. I would like to share that honor with you; everyone, all together now! "If you want my body / and you think I'm sexy ..."

WALT RYSCHKOW
St. Petersburg, Florida

Me and hundreds of thousands of model railroaders worldwide are amazed at Rod's talents as a model railroader!

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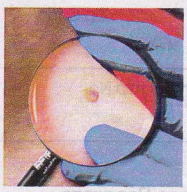

CANCER CHECKS

Thank you for the informative article on skin cancer ["Skin Cancer Is Trickier Than You Think"]. But you failed to mention an aggressive type of skin cancer that is the second most common cause of skin cancer death after melanoma, Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC). It is becoming more prevalent, especially among men over age 50. Jimmy Buffett passed away recently after battling MCC for four years.

CARIEANN MORRISSEY
Cherryville, North Carolina

As one of the earliest breakthrough survivors of stage 4 melanoma (immunotherapy came along just in time), I appreciated the article about self-checking for precancerous skin lesions. But one important piece of advice was omitted: Use the buddy system. You can't see your own scalp under your hair or the bottoms of your feet, two particularly dangerous locations for melanoma. Over the years my wife has spotted several suspicious spots I couldn't have seen on my own.

MIKE GAYNES
Bremerton, Washington

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING

Like a fine wine, he gets better with age. Adore him!
Galina Leslie
Facebook

Love, love, love Rod Stewart and "Maggie May"! Used to blast his albums while doing housework ... made it go by so quickly and I got a daily, heavy-duty workout! Xoxoxo
Cynthia Brower
Facebook

How?? How does this man still have all that beautiful hair?
Kim Sanders Caputo
Facebook

GREAT DAME

After reading through Angelina Jolie's accolades ["Big 5-Oh"], I noticed that one of her biggest achievements/awards was omitted from the list. In October 2014, she received an honorary damehood from Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace for "services to UK foreign policy and the campaign to end war zone sexual violence."

BRYAN W. ROBERTSON
San Francisco, California

SMILE EXPERTISE

Editor's note: In our feature "Hold On to Your Smile" (June/July), we inadvertently left out the name and title of one of our experts. She is Sonya Dunbar, a dental hygienist and public speaker specializing in geriatric tooth care in Jacksonville, Florida.

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Clockwise from top left: Maarten de Boer; Anthony Devlin/AFP/Getty Images; Illustration: Paul Spella

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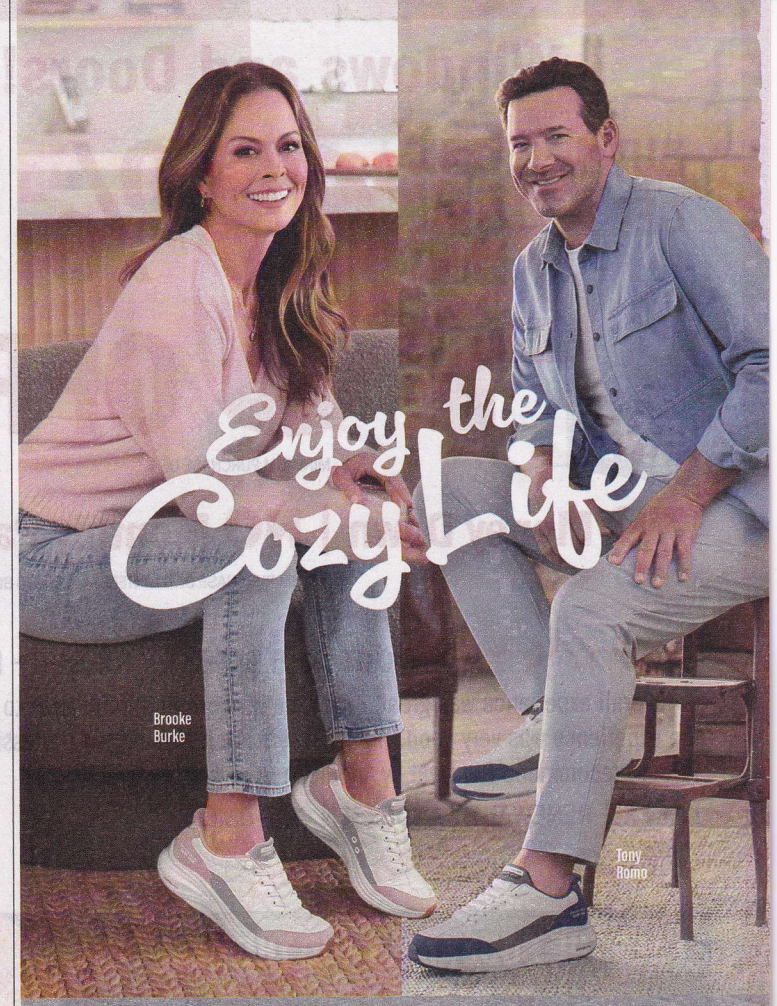

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The A List

6 Surprising Things About Debbie Gibson

1 Decades before Kris Jenner, mom Diane was a tough "momager."
As my mom/manager, she always said, "You're going to do this with or without me, so I may as well be a part of it." We had a lot of respect for each other's fortes. And as a woman—especially in the music business at that time—she had to be 10 times more knowledgeable than the men to be taken seriously.

2 When she was 21, she bought Liberace's piano.
I'm not a materialistic person; I was never someone who needed diamonds and things. The piano is my prized possession. I saw Liberace when I was 7 at Westbury Music Fair. My dream is to use it in Vegas in a residency.

3 She let a reality show set a bunch of her stuff on fire—including her signature black bowler hat from the '80s.
It literally went up in flames before my eyes, and I let them do it, just because of the chaos that was going on in my life. At the end of the day, they are things, but they're still my things.

4 Grunge music shrank her fan base, but she's grateful for loyal Debheads.
A lot of people did leave me behind, but there's a core group that did not. They were out in the world, advocating for me. Now, if I get sick, they're like, "Take your time. We care about your health." To have a whole army of people that feel that way ... I'm sorry, I'm literally gonna cry. It's beyond any legacy I could have dreamt up.

"I feel way better than I felt a decade ago, which always is a reaffirmation to me that age really is just a number."
—Gibson, 54

5 Various therapies help her manage Lyme disease, Epstein-Barr virus and other health issues.
I think there's a place for traditional medicine, energetic medicine and holistic medicine. When you're on your health journey, you have to do what you feel resolute about. It's hard when you're feeling weak to tell people, "Thank you for your opinion, but this is my journey," but that's what really saved my life.

6 Her RV is a vacation home—and mobile recording studio.
I started noticing RVs on the road and was like, "I think I want to test-drive one." I am part road warrior and part homebody, and it provides both. You also realize how little you need when you're living in 25 feet! It gives me more space creatively in my mind, with my little studio in the back—it's been one of the great freedoms of my life. *—As told to Whitney Matheson*

Denise Truscello/Getty Images

Singer, songwriter and actress Debbie Gibson made history at age 17 as the youngest artist to write, produce and perform a Billboard *No. 1 single. Her memoir,* Eternally Electric: The Message in My Music, *will be published on September 9.*

Sex and Violence at 35,000 Feet

Is it OK to watch an R-rated movie on an airplane?

SOMEWHERE OVER the Midwest, I looked up from my sudoku and glimpsed a zombie apocalypse. Blood spurted across my airplane neighbor's tablet screen just as the flight attendant handed me a cranberry cocktail. I looked away, but the damage was done: As an anxious flier, the last thing I wanted was the sight of gore and guts.

Airplane movies used to be curated and edited like broadcast TV, creating a PG-ish experience for the entire cabin. But as airlines retire communal screens and lean into BYOD (bring your own device) culture, passengers can stream what they want—including R-rated sex and violence.

The sky may be the limit, but queuing up *The Substance* when elbow-to-elbow with strangers can have consequences. You may not know others' sensibilities.

"Violence, sex and nudity are certainly the principal categories with the potential to offend adults and disturb children," says Lori Pearson, content editor for kids-in-mind.com, a movie-rating website. But that's not all. Scenes with accidents, gore and vomiting can also trigger anxiety, especially for those with PTSD. A good bet for safe viewing, Pearson says, are movies released before the 1970s.

Airlines are generally pretty liberal when it comes to acceptable in-cabin entertainment, but there are limits. "I have had to ask passengers to turn off porn," says Heather Poole, a flight attendant and author of *Cruising Attitude: Tales of Crashpads, Crew Drama, and Crazy Passengers at 35,000 Feet*. If you're unsure what's appropriate, her advice: "Pretend you're in church with your mother, and you probably won't go wrong."

And if you find yourself with a view of unsettling images, you can politely ask the passenger to turn it off. If that doesn't work, fire up your own movie to battle the zombie apocalypse. Says Pearson: "The only way is distraction with your own devices." *—Perry Santanachote*

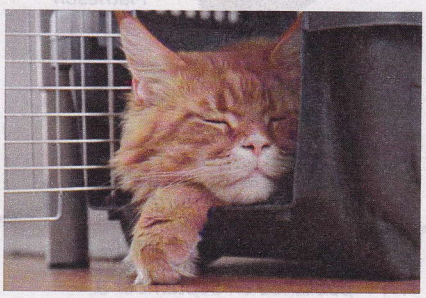
SICK AT SEA

A cruise ship's clinic is much more than a doctor with a medical bag

AS I LIMPED aboard the cruise ship, my left calf felt as it did when I had a blood clot nine years before. I became terrified that I could die of deep vein thrombosis in the Mediterranean Sea. So I found the ship doctor, who ran tests and diagnosed my condition as a pulled muscle.

Turns out ship doctors are well prepared for such situations. The American College of Emergency Physicians recommends ships have a laboratory, X-ray machine, cardiac monitor and defibrillator, electrocardiograph, ventilator/respirator, infusion pumps and pharmacy—and keen medical knowledge.

Says Ibrain Soto, M.D., who works on *Crystal Serenity*: "We are familiar with the management of conditions of patients in advanced age groups." *—Jill Schildhouse*



Crate Expectations

TRAVELING WITH A CAT? There is a simple method to coaxing that sly pet into a car carrier.

Ken Pawlowski, a veterinarian at Insight Veterinary Wellness Center in El Dorado Hills, California, says, "Leave the carrier out for a couple of days in advance with the door open." The crate becomes like the irresistible empty cardboard box, Pawlowski says. "Remove the carrier the night before, then put it back out the morning of the trip so it becomes new again. They will likely go and sit in there. Then just close the door." *—Maisy Fernandez*

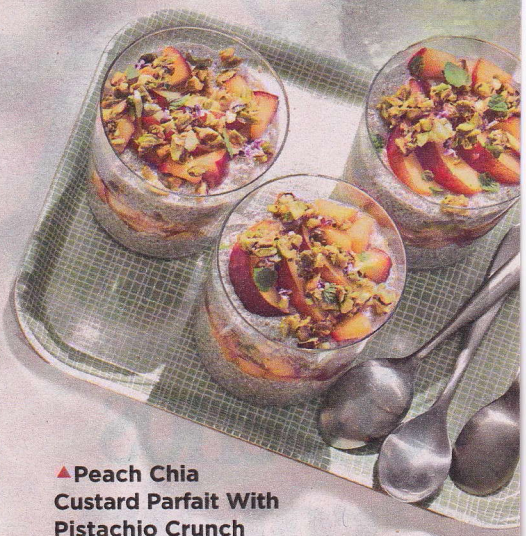
MEMBERS ONLY
Go to aarp.org/pettravel to find 32 more tips for traveling with pets.

Clockwise from top left: Illustration by Zohar Lazar; collage: AARP (source: Getty Images, 4); Getty Images

Sun-Ripened and Ready

Celebrity chef Ameera Muhammad shares recipes inspired by gardeners' and farmers markets' summer bounty

◀ Spicy Stone Fruit Gazpacho With Basil Oil
Move over, tomatoes! This chilled soup stars juicy watermelon and peaches. With a jalapeño kick and a drizzle of basil oil, it tastes like summer in a bowl. Be sure to choose fully ripe fruit.



▲ Peach Chia Custard Parfait With Pistachio Crunch
The balance of creamy, sweet, tart and salty flavors makes this parfait a feast for the senses. The luscious, layered, make-ahead treat is a cool option for breakfast, a snack or dessert.

▼ Zucchini Spirals With Grilled Prawns and Cherry Tomatoes
Succulent prawns and ripe tomatoes bursting with sweetness nestle in pesto-coated "zoodles."

▶ Grilled Vegetable Grain Bowl With Citrus Vinaigrette and Feta
This hearty, customizable bowl is a delicious way to please different palates and dietary needs.

▶ Mediterranean Grazing Board
Too hot to cook? This versatile veggie, fruit and cheese platter scales up or down to feed a couple or a crowd. It's equally delicious with homemade dips or store-bought accompaniments.
—Halona Black

MEMBERS ONLY
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PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR PROTASIO

Good Mornings
start with
Cheerios
Protein

Bake Once, Breakfast All Week

Blueberry-oatmeal cakes make a healthy meal for busy mornings. Bake a batch and keep them in your freezer. For a grab-and-go breakfast, reheat the cakes in the microwave for about 40 seconds

RECIPE

PREP/COOK TIME:
55 MINUTES
(plus 8–12 hours soaking time)
SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

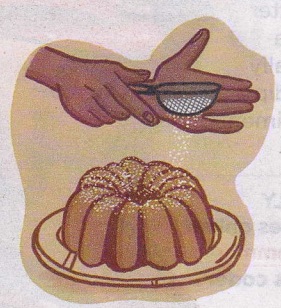
- **2½ cups old-fashioned rolled oats**
- **1½ cups low-fat milk**
- **1 large egg, lightly beaten**
- **⅓ cup pure maple syrup**
- **2 tablespoons canola oil**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **1 teaspoon baking powder**
- **¼ teaspoon salt**
- **¾ cup blueberries, fresh or frozen**

DIRECTIONS

1 Combine oats and milk in a large bowl. Cover and let soak in the refrigerator until much of the liquid is absorbed, at least 8 hours and up to 12 hours.
2 Preheat oven to 375°F. Coat a 12-cup nonstick muffin tin with cooking spray.
3 Stir egg, maple syrup, oil, vanilla, cinnamon, baking powder and salt into the soaked oats until well combined.
4 Divide the mixture among the muffin cups (about ¼ cup each).
5 Top each with 1 tablespoon blueberries.
6 Bake until cakes spring back when touched, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool in the pan for about 10 minutes. Loosen and remove with a knife.

Nutrients per serving
267 calories, 8g protein, 41g carbohydrates, 4g fiber, 8g fat, 34mg cholesterol, 221mg sodium

AARP STAYING SHARP
For more recipes with brain-friendly foods, visit stayingsharp.aarp.org/eatwell or scan code.



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AVAILABLE IN multiple sizes, they're great for sifting flour for baking and dusting powdered sugar over desserts. A fine-mesh strainer is my secret to ultrasmooth gravy to serve over roasted turkey or chicken. If you're short on cabinet space, try fitting the bowl of a large mesh strainer into a covered pot for use as a vegetable steamer. *—Francesca Montillo, culinary tour leader and instructor, Lazy Italian Culinary Adventures, Boston*

Previous page: Food stylist: Julian Hensarling; prop stylist: Josh Hoggle. This page top: Getty Images; Illustration by Vidhya Nagarajan. © Dotdash Meredith. All rights reserved. Used with permission

A breakfast after your own heart.

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CALL CENTER DIRECTOR, CUSTOMER SERVICE
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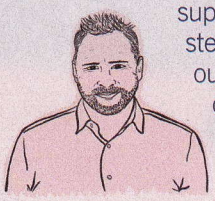

Paul McIntosh is a Director at Consumer Cellular's Phoenix call center.

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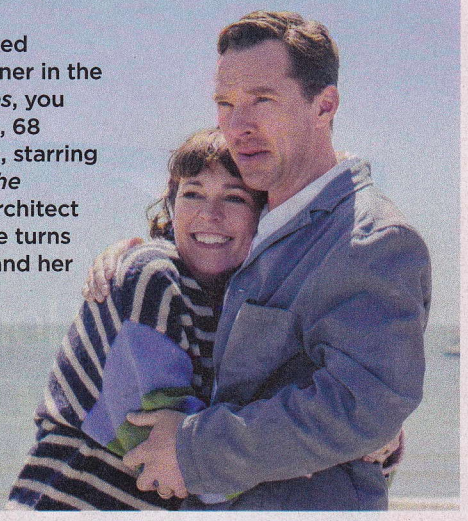
Now Playing

AARP critic Tim Appelo picks upcoming movies and shows for grownups to watch this summer

THE ROSES

In theaters August 29 • If you liked Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner in the 1989 comedy *The War of the Roses*, you may love the reboot by Jay Roach, 68 (*Austin Powers, Meet the Fockers*), starring Benedict Cumberbatch, 49, and *The Crown*'s Olivia Colman, 51, as an architect and a chef whose perfect marriage turns into total war when he gets fired and her career takes off.



THE THURSDAY MURDER CLUB

On Netflix August 28 • Four retirees—Joyce (Celia Imrie, 73), Ibrahim (Ben Kingsley, 81), Elizabeth (Helen Mirren, 80) and Ron (Pierce Brosnan, 72)—investigate cold-case murders for fun instead of playing bridge. But when a crime occurs close to home, they're called to solve a case for real.

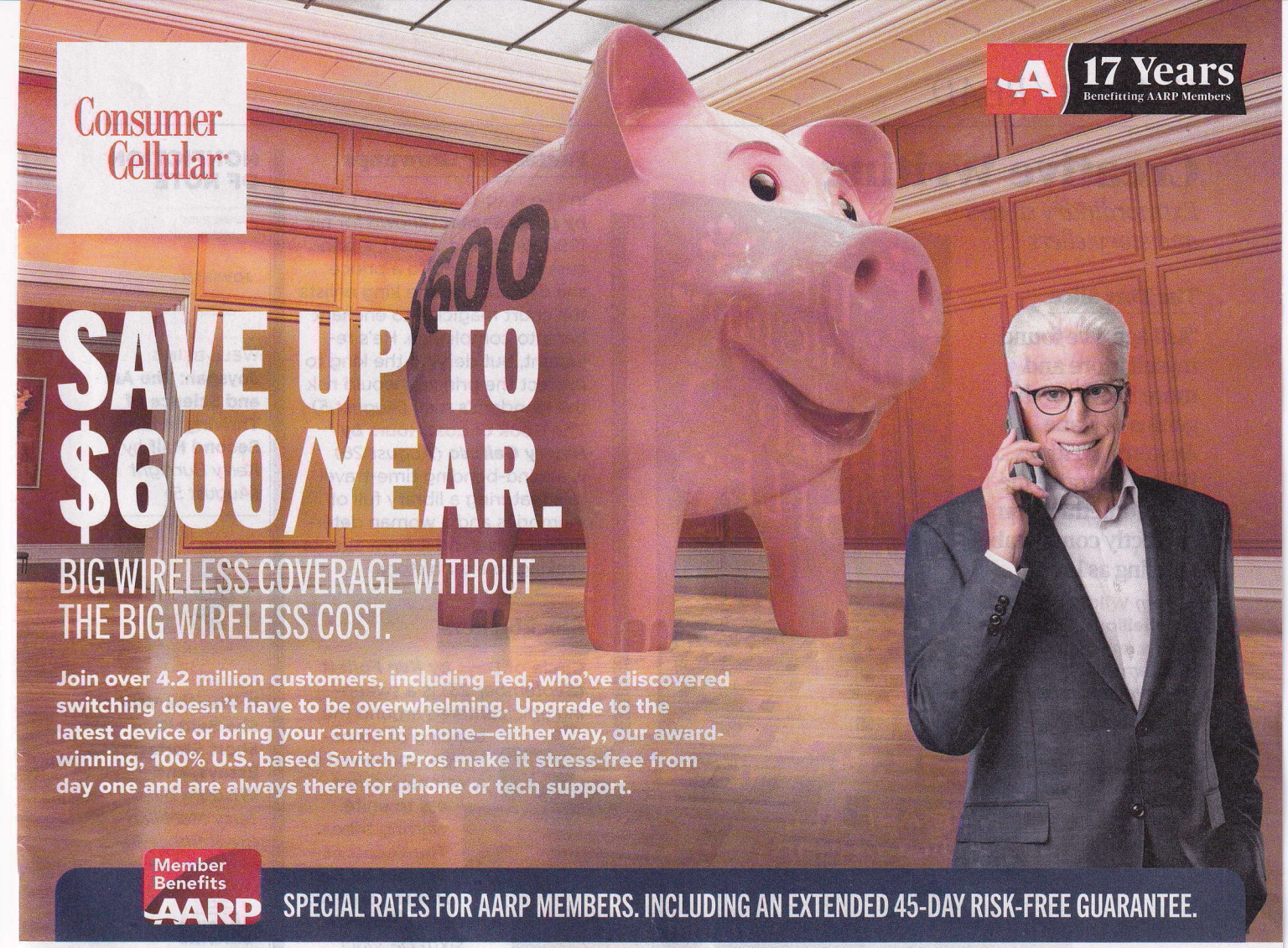
HIGHEST 2 LOWEST

In theaters August 22, on Apple TV+ September 5 • Spike Lee, 68, directs Denzel Washington, 70, who plays a legendary music mogul whose old friend and chauffeur (Jeffrey Wright, 59) loses his son to a kidnapper. The mogul must decide which he values more: his wealth and empire or the son's life. It's an update of Akira Kurosawa's classic 1963 police procedural *High and Low*, starring Toshiro Mifune.

THE NAKED GUN

In theaters August 1 • Liam Neeson, 73, has a particular set of skills—for comedy, not just for revenge flicks. In the reboot of the 1988 cop-show spoof, he plays the son of Lt. Frank Drebin (Leslie Nielsen). Pamela Anderson, 58, costars.

From top: Jaap Buitendijk/Searchlight Pictures, David Lee/A24, Giles Keyte/Netflix, Paramount Pictures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"As I age, I've found myself more and more in awe of the genius of [Jane Austen's] writings.... [They] energize me with something I'm perfectly comfortable labeling as love."

—*From* **Wild for Austen: A Rebellious, Subversive, and Untamed Jane** *(September 2)* ***by Devoney Looser***

Fantasy for Grownups

In **The Magician of Tiger Castle** ***by Louis Sachar*** (known for his 1998 YA classic, *Holes*), a princess is betrothed to a prince she despises, so the king enlists the court magician to enchant her into compliance. He's reluctant, but defying the king to protect the princess would risk the kingdom's ruin. *(August 5)* **The Book of Lost Hours** ***by Hayley Gelfuso*** *(August 26)* is a mind-bending time-travel tale featuring a library full of memories and a woman determined to defend it from agents seeking to alter history.

Blockbusters

Circle of Days ***by Ken Follett*** *(September 23)* is a sweeping epic centered around the building of Stonehenge, conceived by a visionary priestess to unite warring tribes. **The Secret of Secrets** ***by Dan Brown*** *(September 9)*, Brown's sixth *Da Vinci Code* novel, has Professor Robert Langdon romantically involved with an iconoclastic scientist. When she goes missing, he travels the globe searching for answers.

Reviews

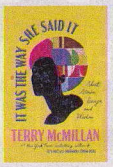
The Elements ***by John Boyne*** *(September 9)*
The Irish author of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2006) offers four absorbing, overlapping stories about characters who've experienced, perpetrated or been associated with terrible crimes, and how their lives are transformed.

Amity ***by Nathan Harris*** *(September 2)*
In the aftermath of the Civil War, Coleman, an intellectual, quirky Black servant, sets out on a dangerous cross-country journey to find his sister, who's trekked to Mexico with their former enslaver. It's a riveting adventure tale that brings a chaotic era to life.

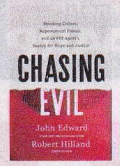
We Are All Guilty Here ***by Karin Slaughter*** *(August 12)*
This gripping thriller kicks off a new series by the author of the Will Trent novels. We meet officer Emily Clifton, who has to uncover some dark secrets in her small Georgia town to identify the killer of two local teens. —*Christina Ianzito*

NONFICTION OF NOTE

WELL-BEING
Joyspan: The Art and Science of Thriving in Life's Second Half *by Kerry Burnight (August 5)*



ESSAYS
It Was the Way She Said It: Short Stories, Essays, and Wisdom *by Terry McMillan (September 9)*



CRIME
Chasing Evil: Shocking Crimes, Supernatural Forces, and an FBI Agent's Search for Hope and Justice *by John Edward and Robert Hilland (September 2)*

MEMOIR
Mother Mary Comes to Me *by Arundhati Roy (September 2)*

Visit aarp.org/books for more reviews, author interviews and book talk.

AARP

Jimmy Fallon

The Tonight Show *host grooves on his old soul, golf and the stuff grandpas do*

Old soul in a young body
My mom's parents, Grandpa Tom and Grandma Gloria, lived in our backyard in Saugerties [New York] in a little cottage. My grandfather and I used to go to the VFW a lot, so I hung out with a bunch of 70-year-old guys when I was growing up. I'm kind of an old soul from that.

Laugh it up
My dad's dad, Jim, was very funny. He and my parents loved to throw parties. Everyone would get up and do a bit, sing a song or tell a joke. My parents would pay me 50 cents to do Rodney Dangerfield. I was probably 8 or 9. I would put on a tie: "My wife's cooking is so bad. I mean, since when does toast have bones?" Or I'd do a *Saturday Night Live* sketch with my sister, dressed up in my parents' disco-y clothes from the '70s. "We are two wild and crazy ..."

Nature can be dangerous
My parents were overprotective, maybe because Grandpa Tom was a cop. I got a tent once from a garage sale, and I put it up in my backyard, and my mom came out in the middle of the night and said, "Get back inside. There's a raccoon maybe out here."

Keep your hair combed
Grandpa Tom didn't like my messy, spiky hair. He asked, "Will you comb it? Like, a nice part to the side." But he loved my stand-up. He liked that I didn't curse. He was there for a bunch of gigs where I bombed, and he'd say, "Stick with it."

Golf is for life
In our garden, one of our tomato plants had a big thing at the end of it holding it up. "What is that?" I asked Grandpa Tom. "That's a golf club. You should learn this. This is a good investment because you can play this for the rest of your life." Which I still do.

Taylor Hill/FilmMagic/Getty Images

Meet the in-laws
The night before my parents are meeting my wife's parents, my mom calls: "Daddy's front tooth fell out. The dentist is on vacation. We have a plan. He's not gonna smile. One more thing. I rubbed my eye in my sleep, and I got a bloodshot eye." This is gonna be your new in-laws: a jack-o'-lantern and a pirate. It still worked out. I got married.

I got the music in me
My dad was in Vietnam, in the Navy, and he used to play reel-to-reel tapes of him singing doo-wop. So I always assumed that doo-wop music was around in 1969. But then I'm watching movies like *Platoon,* and I'm, like, Where's the doo-wop? It turns out it was already retro by the time Vietnam came. My dad was just a little late to the game.

Keep trying new things
I kind of started my picture book series [*DADA, MAMA, BABY, NANA*] as a joke. For my latest, I thought, *What would be funny about Grandpa?* Well, *PAPA Doesn't Do Anything* is pretty funny because I think 10 out of 10 moms would say that Grandpa doesn't do anything. But as you read it, you realize all the stuff grandpas actually *do* do. *—As told to Gayle Jo Carter*

Comedian Jimmy Fallon, 50, is the creator, executive producer and host of NBC's upcoming unscripted reality competition show, On Brand. The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon *airs weeknights at 11:35 ET on NBC.*

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54	$21.90	$18.10	$42.80	$35.20	$63.70	$52.30	$105.50	$86.50
55	$23.20	$19.25	$45.40	$37.50	$67.60	$55.75	$112.00	$92.25
56	$24.35	$19.75	$47.70	$38.50	$71.05	$57.25	$117.75	$94.75
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HealthyYou

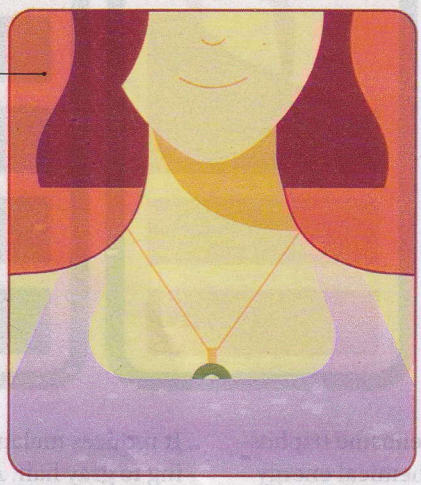
The Four Pillars of Safer Exercise

Bad form can undercut your workout and increase your chances of injury. To minimize risk and maximize results, follow these guidelines from Mike Mancias, chief human performance adviser to LeBron James and author of Game Plan By MYATT MURPHY

DON'T MOVE: YOUR NECK!

Whenever you turn your head to look anyplace but forward, it can misalign your neck and overstress its muscles. Tilting your chin downward (to look at your feet, for example) can also compromise your breathing.

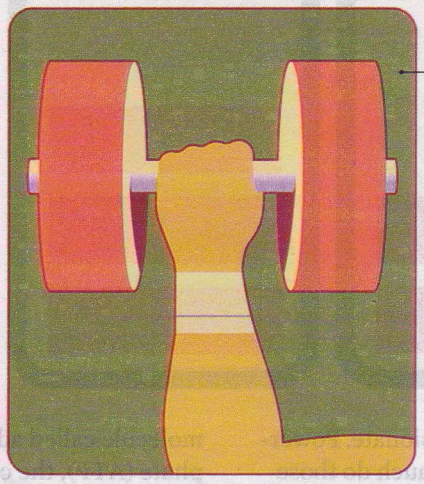
PROTECT YOURSELF: Aim your gaze on a spot in the distance that's slightly above eye level and keep it there, since your head will often follow where your eyes look. Or try this trick: Imagine there's a string attached to the top of your head pulling it upward and an egg underneath your chin that will break if you look down.

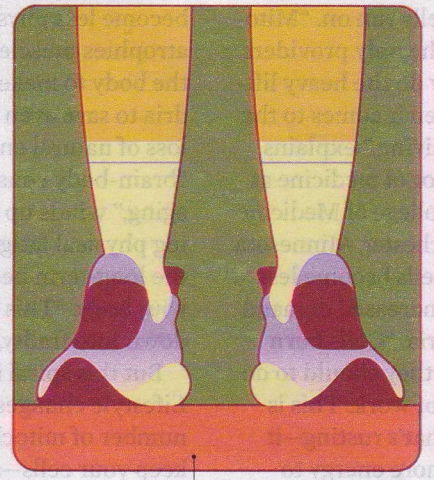


DON'T MOVE: YOUR WRISTS!

Letting your wrists bend too far forward or backward when lifting weights can stress the ligaments and tendons in your hands and wrists. That can raise your risk of injury and prevent you from lifting the full amount of weight your muscles are capable of handling.

PROTECT YOURSELF: Place your wrists in a neutral position to form a straight line from your knuckles through your forearms. Use a firm grip (like you're grabbing a steering wheel), but don't squeeze too tightly. That will tucker out your hands and forearms.

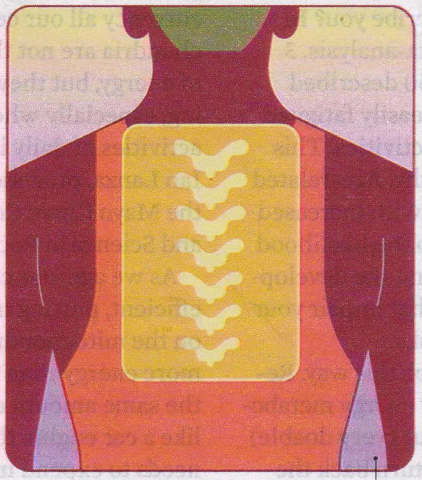




DON'T MOVE: YOUR FEET!

The more anchored you are to the floor, the more force you're able to generate when lifting weights.

PROTECT YOURSELF: Space your feet either hip-width or shoulder-width apart (whichever is more comfortable), and distribute your body weight evenly on both feet—no leaning. In most cases, your feet should stay flat on the floor from your toes to your heels.



DON'T MOVE: YOUR SPINE!

Bad posture puts you at risk for a lower back injury. It can also compress your diaphragm, tiring you out faster.

PROTECT YOURSELF: Pull your belly button in toward your spine, then gently tighten your core muscles—and keep them that way as you exercise.

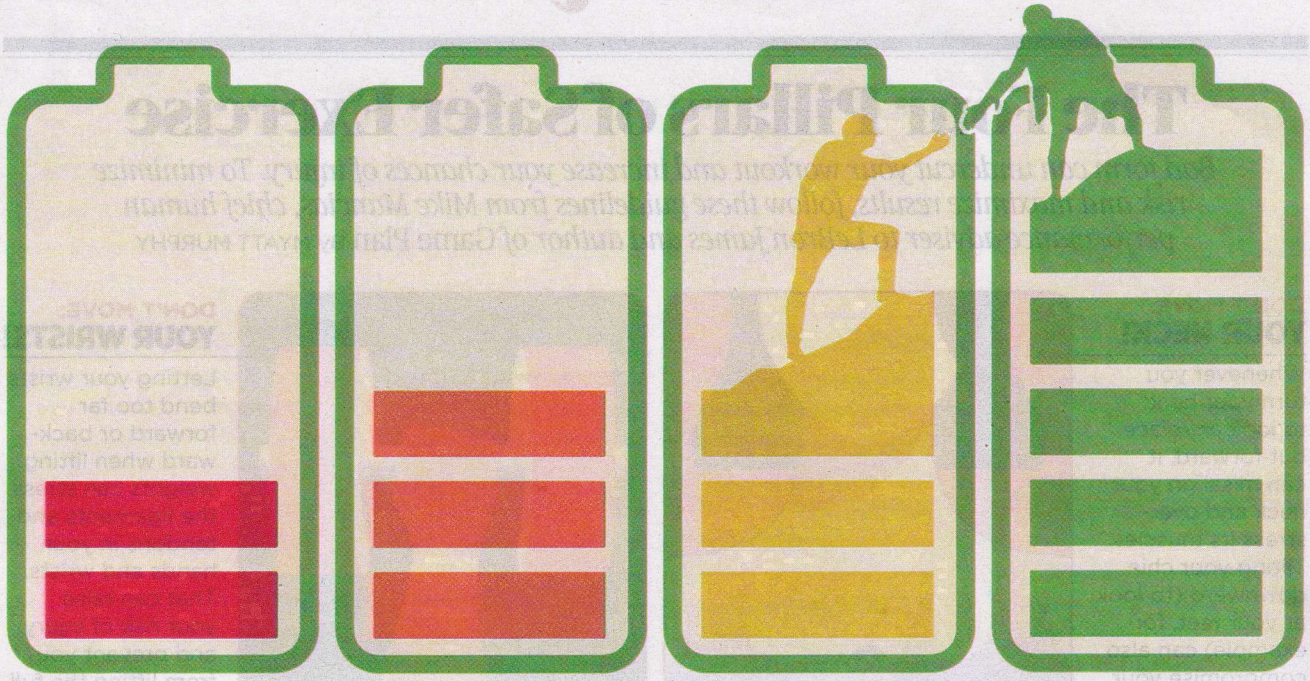
Myatt Murphy is the author of more than a dozen books on exercise and was a collaborator on Game Plan.

Getty Images

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JORDON CHEUNG

Reclaim Your Spark

Aging changes your body's cells in ways that can sap your energy. Here's how to amp it up By JESSICA MIGALA



PERKY. Passionate. Powerful. How much do those words describe you? In a 2025 meta-analysis, 3 out of 5 adults over 60 described themselves as being easily fatigued after doing normal activities. This slowdown isn't healthy. Age-related fatigue is associated with increased mortality risk, due to the likelihood of physical decline and the development of conditions that impair your ability to do daily tasks.

It doesn't have to be this way. Researchers who study energy metabolism say there are four (very doable) things that can help turn back the clock on your cells to restore your energy level—and maintain it well into your later years.

Why Our Batteries Run Low

Mitochondria are structures that act as the energy processors of our cells. Using the food we eat, they create a molecule called adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the chemical energy currency all our cells run on. "Mitochondria are not the only providers of energy, but they do the heavy lifting, especially when it comes to the activities of daily living," explains Ian Lanza, professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science in Rochester, Minnesota.

As we age, our cells become less efficient, putting increased demand on the mitochondria. "Cells burn more energy than they should to do the same amount of work. This is like a car engine that's rusting—it needs to expend more energy to go the same distance," says Martin Picard, a mitochondrial psychobiologist at Columbia University.

As your brain senses that your cells are in overdrive, it looks to conserve energy elsewhere: It slows down the process of rebuilding muscle, causing you to lose muscle mass. It reduces melanin production, leading to gray hair. And you naturally become less physically active, which atrophies muscles and encourages the body to make fewer mitochondria to save even more energy. This loss of natural energy, called the "brain-body conservation model of aging," winds up backfiring by creating physical fatigue that diminishes the long-term health and vitality of your body. "This begins a spiraling down into frailty," Picard says.

But this spiral isn't inevitable. Lifestyle changes can increase the number of mitochondria and help keep your cells—and you—feeling more energetic.

Don't Stop Moving

Like muscles, mitochondria work on a "use it or lose it" basis, says Lanza. "There are big differences in energy metabolism between people who have a sedentary lifestyle

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL SPELLA

versus those who maintain physical activity," he says. "When older adults are able to maintain healthy guideline-recommended levels of physical activity, there are fewer age-related deficits in mitochondrial function."

YOUR MOVE Aim for the recommended 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, plus two days of muscle-strengthening activity, per week. How do you know if you're working hard enough? "If you do something and find you're breathing harder—going upstairs, walking somewhere, having sex—you're stimulating your mitochondria," says Picard.

Suss Out Sleep Struggles

With age, sleep isn't as deep, long or consolidated, says Aric Prather, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of California, San Francisco, and author of *The Sleep Prescription*. "Sleep lives in the brain. Like everything else, our brain ages," he says, which may be why we see sleep change in the fifth decade of life and beyond. These changes can make sleep feel less restorative—and there's evidence that sleep loss may also accelerate cellular aging.

YOUR MOVE If you feel run-down during the day despite being in bed for seven-plus hours a night, you need to rule out any relevant medical conditions or disorders, like obstructive sleep apnea, Prather says. Medications can also interfere with sleep or cause daytime drowsiness, so ask your doctor if you should take your pills at different times of day or before bed. Avoid dozing or catnapping by structuring your day with planned activities. This allows sleep to be pushed into the night, where it can get to work on cellular repair and regeneration.

Narrow Your Eating Window

Too much food is an "energetic burden" to the body, says Picard, since it has to expend energy to handle additional calories. "Eating more doesn't give you more energy, it actually steals your energy," he says.

Intermittent fasting (IF), which essentially means putting guardrails around the time you eat, has two main benefits. One, restricting eating to an eight-hour window tends to reduce your daily intake of calories. Two, IF improves autophagy—the process by which cells clear out trash, like free radicals. "Intermittent fasting activates autophagy to bring cellular balance back to health by getting rid of damaged mitochondria," explains Rajat Singh, M.D., a professor of medicine and director of the Comprehensive Liver Research Center at UCLA.

YOUR MOVE Research suggests there are benefits to a 16-to-8 IF schedule, where you fast for 16 hours and eat within an eight-hour window. However, long-term IF isn't sustainable for everyone, especially older adults. For best results, find a fasting period that works for you and that you can stick with, says Singh. (And, of course, get clearance from your doctor first.) Maybe that's 12 hours of fasting—from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., for example—coupled with regular exercise. The key is consistency.

Talk to More People

You know how being stressed and overwhelmed can lead to feeling fatigued? That's evidence that your state of mind is affecting your mitochondria, says Picard.

"People who feel more positive about life have more mitochondria with greater capacity for energy transformation than people who have no purpose and fewer positive life experiences," he says. Positive states of mind may increase biological energy through the mitochondria, helping you feel more alive.

YOUR MOVE Just eight hours of solitude can be enough to drag down your energy. Call a friend, send your kids a text, get together to play cards. "These are all things that keep brain and muscle networks active to diminish the hallmarks of aging," says Christiaan Leeuwenburgh, a professor at the University of Florida's Institute on Aging. Focus on new activities and breaking routines. Ask a friend or neighbor what they're doing tomorrow—and don't hesitate to ask if you can join them. ■

Jessica Migala writes about health and lifestyle for Cosmopolitan, Everyday Health *and other publications.*

FIVE FAST FATIGUE FIXES

Revamping cellular health takes time. These quick hacks don't

1. Drink a glass of water. Even mild dehydration causes fatigue and tanks alertness. And older adults are more susceptible to the condition.

2. Step outside for a break. Connecting with nature can be restorative—and a good antidote to mental burnout and workday stress.

3. Walk for a few. For every 30 minutes of sitting, take a light, three-minute walk. This pattern is known to help fight fatigue.

4. Try cold water. Turn on the shower for a cool blast; people report feeling more active, alert, attentive and inspired after a bracing immersion.

5. Give a sniff. Inhaling a scent like peppermint or citrus has been shown to boost alertness, likely because odors have a strong effect on one's emotions.

INSIDE How do I get out of paying for that? P. 21 / When your tenant is your daughter P. 23

MoneySaver

The Cost of 55+ Living

Active retirement communities promise friendship and fulfillment, along with swimming pools, free concerts and–need it be said?–pickleball. At different developments around the country, here's what you'll pay to cover a home purchase and homeowners association or amenity fees (taxes and utilities not included) By KERRI ANNE RENZULLI

Laguna Woods Village

CALIFORNIA

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: $450,000

MONTHLY FEES: $761–$880

Recreational opportunities include an art studio, a woodshop, several swimming pools and an active bridge club. There's even an equestrian center where you can board a horse for $412 a month or take a group lesson for $35.

Latitude Margaritaville Hilton Head

SOUTH CAROLINA

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: $505,000

MONTHLY FEES: $323–$368

After working out at the Fins Up! fitness center, Jimmy Buffett fans can sip margaritas at the Changes in Attitude poolside bar, have a bite at the Latitude Bar & Chill restaurant or take their pets to the Barkaritaville pet spa.

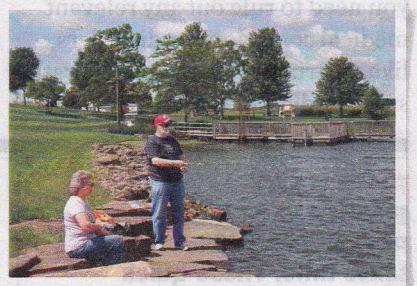
Robson Ranch

TEXAS

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: $672,000

MONTHLY FEE: $326

Residents up for a swim can try the resort-style pool, the lap pool or the grandchildren's pool, designed especially for kids. You can also lease a box at the community garden, play softball or swing away on one of the 16 pickleball courts.



Sun City Huntley

ILLINOIS

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: $380,000

MONTHLY FEES: $155–$564

Amenities include a 4,800-square-foot woodshop, an outdoor model railroad system, a 14-acre stocked fishing lake, volleyball courts and a large sauna.

Clockwise from top left: Courtesy Laguna Woods Village; Courtesy Latitude Margaritaville Hilton Head; Impressions Photos/Courtesy Sun City Huntley; Seth Brooks/Dallas Drone Guy/Courtesy Robson Ranch

Note: Median home prices, from Redfin, are as of May 2025.

Hot Springs Village ARKANSAS
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: $320,000
MONTHLY FEE: $113
This 26,000-acre gated community includes 11 recreational lakes and more than 30 miles of walking and biking trails. A pass for two that covers a fitness center, tennis, croquet and other activities runs an additional $1,140 per year.

Tellico Village TENNESSEE
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: $612,500
MONTHLY FEE: $182
Three golf courses and three marinas abut the 33-mile-long lake at the heart of this development. Pay as little as $714 per year for a boat slip or $200 to store your kayak in a locked facility by the water.

Sun City ARIZONA
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: $275,000
MONTHLY FEE: $54
Opened in 1960, Sun City is the oldest active retirement community in the country. Highlights include fishing at Viewpoint Lake (three-trout daily limit, no state license required), two bowling alleys and outdoor concerts at the Sun Bowl. ■

From top: Courtesy Hot Springs Village; Courtesy Tellico Village; Courtesy Recreation Centers of Sun City, AZ

MONEY REPORT

Money Manners

AARP's financial etiquette columnist has advice for people confronted with some awkward situations By LIZZIE POST

Q: My husband and I offered to pay for our son's wedding, but we made the mistake of not giving him a budget. The choices he has made are very expensive—a high-end caterer, a 12-person band, even a wedding cake that costs $1,500! How do we set a spending limit at this point?

Asking to have a conversation is a great way to begin, since it sets a tone of respect and ensures you can speak with your son when he can be attentive. Be clear about what you want to discuss: "Seth, I'd like to have a conversation with you about the wedding expenses."

Once you're together (or on a call), be both candid and kind, drawing confidence from the fact that you are in control of your own finances. "I want to apologize," you might say. "I'm sorry that, in the excitement of your engagement, we didn't set a budget for your wedding and what your father and I are willing to contribute. I realize that can make wedding planning more difficult. We are going to give you a lump sum of what we're willing to contribute to the wedding, and you and Joanie can spend it how you wish." (Whether you're more comfortable with a lump sum or paying for specific expenses, being clear is key.)

Why apologize? Because you have caused, albeit unintentionally, a misconception, and your kid might feel blindsided. Even if his expectations were unrealistic—we're talking eye-poppingly unrealistic—he and his fiancée have spent time in a dreamland, and receiving this information could feel like you're pulling a 180 on them.

Have this difficult conversation as soon as possible. Delaying will only give your son and his partner more time to fall in love with things that are outside your budget. It will also increase the chances that less expensive options will be booked up.

Then, when the special day arrives, celebrate! And treat yourself to a nice, big slice of that wedding cake. →

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JON KRAUSE

Q: My wife and I enjoy going out to dinner with another couple, but there's an issue. We don't drink, but our friends do. They often order several cocktails or a bottle of wine for themselves, which adds a *lot* to the bill. We don't think we should be responsible for splitting the check 50-50. Are we being total cheapskates?

Total cheapskates you are not.

Whenever someone orders more food or alcohol, etiquette dictates that they acknowledge it and offer to get separate checks. It's also traditional for the person who extends the dinner invitation to foot the bill, but that's often not how we organize dining out with friends. We typically make plans more casually, and we don't discuss how the bill will be handled. Also, people often don't notice that they ordered more food or drinks than their companions.

I recommend addressing the topic before your next outing. That way, everyone goes into the meal knowing what to expect.

Be concise: "I know in the past we've split the bill, but since Allison and I aren't drinking, we'd love to grab separate checks." If you forget to broach the topic in advance, use the same line at the end of the meal.

A fair split is a perfectly reasonable request, so don't feel embarrassed or awkward asking for separate checks. And if your friends balk, maybe it's best to enjoy your meals with them at home.

Q: People often send me presents that I don't like, and I'm looking for ways to save money. Is it OK to give a gift I received to someone else, or is regifting bad manners?

When done well, regifting can be a kind gesture that reduces waste. But when done poorly, it can result in hurt and resentment for both the recipient and the person who gave you the gift. I've heard of some doozies, including people who regifted a present to the person who gave them the gift. Oof! Not a fun moment for anyone involved.

Gift giving should be a thoughtful, joyous experience. A regifted item can check that box. But it's all in how you approach it. If you've received a gift that you already have, it's OK to give the new one to someone else as a present. It's also fine to regift something you received years ago—such as a watch, a piece of artwork or a special keepsake—that you cherished but are ready to pass on to a loved one.

Avoid the "convenience regift," where you regift something simply because you don't like it and want to get rid of it. That makes it all about you and not about them—the antithesis of what gift giving should be. You're also cheating yourself out of the wonderful feeling of giving a gift you know the recipient will enjoy.

As for whether to acknowledge that the present is a regift, one approach is to be straightforward with the recipient: "Alex, I received this as a gift, but I already have one, and I really thought you'd enjoy it." This shows the recipient that you're not just giving them a random item but rather something you think would be great for them based on their interests or needs.

However, if you'd rather not reveal that the present is a regift, here are some ground rules.

→The item must have all its parts and manuals and be in its original packaging.

→The gift should not be handmade (like the sweater your friend knit for you last Christmas), unique, monogrammed or personalized, even if the engraved initials or a date match!

→You need to be 99 percent sure that the person who gave you the gift and the person who will receive it would not be upset if they found out you regifted it.

→I saved this for last because it's the most important and the most forgotten rule: You have to genuinely believe that the person receiving the gift will appreciate the item.

Bottom line: Regifting can be beautiful when handled with care. ■

Lizzie Post, the great-great-granddaughter of Emily Post, is copresident of the Emily Post Institute.

MEMBERS ONLY
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Portrait icon by Delphine Lee

Jean Chatzky
TO THE RESCUE

When Mom Is the Landlord

She stopped collecting rent from her daughter. Should she start up again?

THE PROBLEM

Karen Heidel, widowed in 2014, remarried five years ago and moved from her house in North East, Maryland, to her new husband's nearby home. Rather than sell her old house, she rented it to her daughter, Brittany, a recently divorced mother of three. "I wanted to make a safe haven for them," says Heidel, 75. Under a simple agreement, Brittany paid her mom $600 a month and covered the mortgage-free home's $2,200 annual tax bill ... until Brittany hit a rough patch and the rent checks stopped. Now Brittany has bounced back, and Heidel wonders if she should ask for rent again. Would that make her a bad mom? Or should she give Brittany the home outright? Heidel's adult son seems OK with that. But not treating her kids equally makes her squeamish.

Heidel owns this home free and clear.

THE ADVICE

For help, I turned to estate planning attorneys Craig Parker, of the online service Trust & Will,* and Ann-Margaret Carrozza, who practices in New York. Both thought Heidel should back-burner her maternal impulses and focus first on her own financial security. Here's how they viewed her situation.

Problem: Heidel may need to pay for long-term care. For now, her finances are fine: Social Security and her pension from teaching more than cover her living expenses and her share of the mortgage on a beach home she bought with Ray, her current husband. She has what she calls a "comfortable" amount of retirement savings, and the house where Brittany lives is worth about $350,000. But with no long-term care policy in place, her income and savings may not be enough to cover her care.

Recommendation: Keep the house. If Heidel were to need care, the equity in the home would help pay for it, Parker says. And if her daughter got the house now, Brittany would lose a tax break on any sale. Capital gains taxes would be based on what Heidel paid for the home and any improvements; if Brittany inherited it instead, taxes on a sale would be calculated based on the home's value when Heidel died, likely meaning a smaller tax bill for Brittany upon selling.

Problem: By allowing Brittany to live in her home without a lease, Heidel is vulnerable in the worst-case scenario of a conflict between them, Parker says: "You can't just move in. You can't change the locks." And if Heidel ever wants to take out a loan against the property, she'll need to show the lease as collateral.

Recommendation: Get a lease in place that details Brittany's rights as a tenant and her responsibilities, such as the property tax payments (which Brittany has continued to make). And start collecting rent.

Problem: Heidel worries that giving Brittany the house would be unfair to her adult son, Rick, even though Rick recently tried to ease her concerns, saying he and his wife didn't need it. Still, Heidel says she's torn, because jobs can come and go, and Rick's situation could change.

Recommendation: Leave everything to be split between Brittany and Rick, giving Brittany the right to buy him out of the house. If Rick wants to give Brittany his share after Heidel dies, he can simply sign it over, Parker says. It's an easy transaction.

THE OUTCOME

Heidel agreed about not giving Brittany the house now. But she pushed back on other advice. After Rick told her that if she died anytime soon, he'd immediately give his half of the house to his sister, Heidel told me she would leave Brittany the house and Rick a greater share of her money. And because Brittany's federal government job is now "uncertain," Heidel says, she's holding off on asking for rent. I get it. Sometimes love and worry preempt taxes and legal issues. As they should. ■

Want Jean Chatzky to write about helping you sort out your financial problem? Email rescue@aarp.org.

Maansi Srivastava

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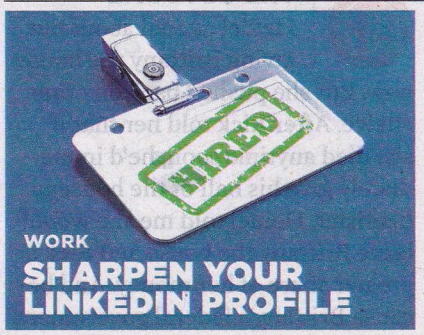
BEING EXCELLENT TO EACH OTHER ... ON BROADWAY

KEANU REEVES and Alex Winter, both 60, are reuniting in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* on Broadway, from September 13. How does the play compare with the pair's 1989 comedy, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*? *—Eric Spitznagel*

WAITING FOR GODOT	CATEGORY	BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE
Yes	Slacker Best Friends	Yes
Shabby, secondhand clothes	Fashion Sense	Mismatched thrift store outfits
They just wait next to a tree endlessly.	Lack of Ambition	They fail their history class "most heinously."
None	Parental Figures	None, apart from one underage stepmom
"Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful."	Quote That Could Be a Nirvana Lyric	"Bogus. Heinous. Most non-triumphant."
An enslaved character's name is Lucky.	Use of Irony	Their band changes the course of history.
Godot	Man Who Never Arrives	Eddie Van Halen



WORK

SHARPEN YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

WE ASKED EXPERTS how to shine on LinkedIn when you're job hunting.

Make a splash. Focus on three items: your timeline photo, which should hint at your line of work; your headshot, which should be a recent, shoulders-up pic; and your headline, which should be zingy. Visit the LinkedIn Talent Blog for examples.

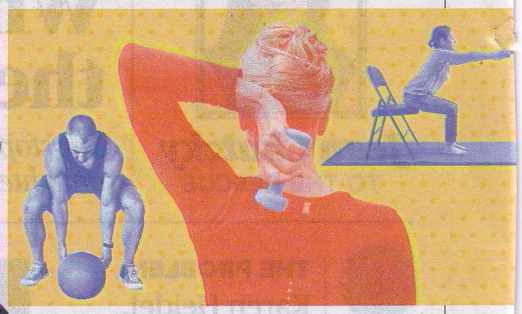
Summarize smartly. Write your LinkedIn summary in the first person, not third person, to sound more engaging. Use keywords that match the opportunities you're seeking.

Remove unnecessary items. Prune your education and experience sections periodically to keep the focus on your current expertise and goals.

Highlight your talents. Weave relevant skills throughout your profile by including them in your summary and job descriptions as well as in the Skills section of your profile.

Focus on impact. Throughout your profile, emphasize the effect your work has had, spotlighting the numbers in any measurable results.

Give props. Share and request recommendations from colleagues to keep your profile fresh. *—Gwen Moran*



FITNESS

GET MORE MUSCLE POWER NOW

A NOT-SO-FUN FACT: Muscle power—the ability to produce force quickly—tends to decline faster than muscle strength in your 50s. And this explosive power is key to preserving your mobility and bone strength for the long haul, physiologists say. Consider these power fitness tips from Shari Andrews, physician, personal trainer and author of *Find Your Pulse.* (And share any questions with your health care provider.)

Get low. For a lower-body boost, try sit-to-stand drills, Andrews suggests. Move from a seated chair position to standing, back to seated—without using your hands to propel you. Or try bodyweight squats.

Move your upper body. Try torso moves like a standing side toss: Stand perpendicular to a wall with an inflatable ball at the hip that's farther from the wall, then twist as you throw the ball against a wall.

Keep rests brief. When you're focused on functional power training, resting just 30 to 60 seconds between sets will "keep [your] heart rate up and mimic real-world demands," Andrews notes.

Focus on form. To avoid injuring yourself, master any movements before adding more weight or speed, Andrews says.

Squeeze in your sessions. "You don't need a lot of time," says Andrews, noting you can focus on building power two or three times per week. *—Leslie Quander Wooldridge*

Clockwise from top left: Photofest; Magdalena Wosinska/New York Times/Redux; muscle illustration: Cut It Out Design Studio

Will I Ever Be Able to Retire?

Many Gen X women worry they'll never save enough

TRACI SORIANO, 54, used to avoid looking at her retirement account balances. The owner of a massage therapy practice in Bellingham, Washington, Soriano says she was afraid of what she might learn. "I really struggled," she recalls. "My fear of not having enough made me not want to see what I had." Soriano, a single mother who also teaches massage at a community college, finally confronted the situation after a snafu with her Social Security account inspired her to track down her balances and monitor them.

It's a common anxiety for Gen X women. Only 27 percent of women ages 50 to 64 are confident they'll have enough money to live comfortably in retirement, according to a 2022 AARP survey. They're part of the first generation to come of age after the shift from pensions to 401(k)s—only 14 percent of Gen Xers have access to a defined-benefit pension. And many women have seen their retirement savings lag behind those of their male peers. On average, Gen X men have 53 percent more in their 401(k)s than Gen X women do, according to a 2023 report by Bank of America.

Women get behind for many reasons, says Louis Barajas, CEO of International Private Wealth Advisors in Irvine, California. Challenges include career interruptions to care for children and elders, the gender pay gap, divorce and solo parenting. "Career interruptions also mean they weren't participating in Social Security, so sometimes they're behind on that as well," adds Barajas.

Arriving in your 50s with fears your retirement isn't secure can feel overwhelming. But financial experts say it's not too late. You still have time to save, says Marie Taylor, a financial adviser with Edward Jones in West Hempstead, New York. In fact, creating a savings plan reduces stress. Here's what financial pros recommend.

Bite the bullet. First, face your fears and look at what you have. Sometimes people assume they haven't saved enough but find they just need a realistic retirement plan, says Autumn Knutson, founder and lead financial planner at Styled Wealth in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Context is important for planning, she adds—like knowing when and where you might retire and when you'll claim Social Security.

Get educated. Guidance could come from a financial planner, podcast, friend, book or community resource. Barajas recommends the no-frills *Personal Finance for Dummies* as a building block. The key: "Just start," he says.

Take baby steps. Budget to find chunks of discretionary income, even small amounts, to devote to paying down high-interest debt, and prioritize contributing to a tax-advantaged account like an IRA or a 401(k). For example, if there's no flexibility in your income, could you take in a roommate to help share costs?

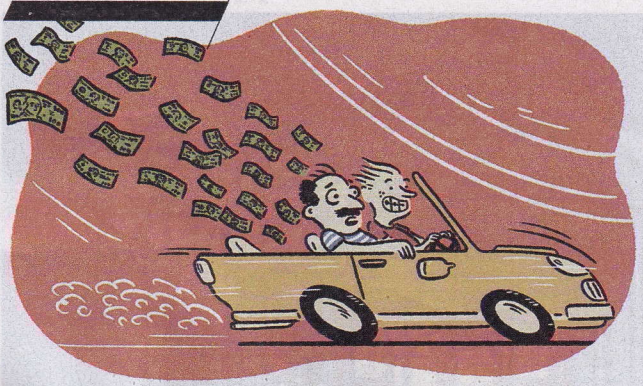
Ask for more. Consider asking for a raise at work. Not eligible for a raise? Find out what it requires so you're prepared when an opportunity arises.

After Soriano decided to get a clearer view of her financial picture, her anxiety eased. She knew she'd left $8,000 in a 401(k) from a government job she'd held, and she discovered that it had grown over time to $35,000. She also learned that the job had come with a pension that will add about $400 per month to her income once she retires. It didn't add up to enough to ensure a comfortable retirement, but it was enough to spur Soriano to remake her budget and begin contributing more to her community college retirement account. "Having clear information gives me feelings of safety and empowerment," she says.

Even though the path to retirement may be trickier for Gen X women than it was for their mothers, there's plenty of hope, Knutson says: "People have a lot more agency than they realize." —*Joanna Nesbit*

ILLUSTRATION BY GLENN HARVEY

Visit aarp.org/moneytools for online calculators to help with financial planning.



How to Insure Your New Driver

SEEING YOUR 16-year-old behind the wheel is stressful enough—even before adding the kid to your car insurance policy. Teens pay the highest auto insurance rates of any age demographic.

Teenagers are costly to insure for the same reason parents chew their fingernails on Saturday nights: Teens are inexperienced, easily distracted and involved in crashes nearly four times as often as drivers age 20 or older.

Luckily, many of the strategies that cut your insurance costs can also protect your teen.

- **Enroll them in a defensive driving course.** This will train your teenager to anticipate situations that could lead to collisions. Even if your insurer doesn't offer a discount for taking the course, safe driving habits can lead to lower premiums.
- **Provide a safe car.** Many insurers offer discounts for safety features like blind spot detection, antilock braking systems or backup cameras.
- **Encourage good grades.** Many insurance companies offer good-student discounts to high school and college students. Your teen may need to provide school transcripts or test scores to qualify for the discount.
- **Sign them up for a telematics program.** These monitoring programs reward safe driving. The insurer provides an app or a plug-in to measure risky driving habits (like sudden braking or speeding) and sets the premium accordingly.
- **Increase your deductible.** Upping your deductible can lower your premium. Just set enough aside to cover the bigger deductible in case of a claim.

Affording your teen's car insurance is possible. Letting go of your anxiety at seeing them back down the driveway may take a little more effort. *—Emily Guy Birken*

50 BILLION

Estimated number of times Mario has died during play of Super Mario Bros. since the video game was first released, on September 13, 1985.

Based on historical sales estimates from industry sources, assuming 100 Mario deaths per copy of the game.

We're Alcohol-Free—and Surprised to Be Loving It

A FEW MONTHS ago, at age 50, my husband was put on permanent medication that required one major lifestyle change: sobriety.

Like me, he had been a casual drinker. Now, he couldn't indulge. But with a new "mocktail bar" opening in our neighborhood, the adjustment wasn't nearly as hard as expected.

Thirty-five percent of Americans ages 50 to 64 abstain from alcohol, according to a recent Gallup poll. If you're considering reducing or quitting alcohol, here are some options:

Explore the grocery aisles. There are more than 150 nonalcoholic beers on the market, available in most major grocery and liquor store chains.

Find a mocktail bar. Alcohol-free bars offer artisanal concoctions and social spaces for adults.

Become a mock mixologist. Mocktail apps, YouTube videos, cookbooks and websites can help midlife nondrinkers move beyond Shirley Temples.

Build community. Organize a mocktail party at home or a gathering at an alcohol-free bar to support and meet others who are reducing their alcohol consumption.

35% of Americans ages 50 to 64 abstain from alcohol.

Debbie Podlogar, 53, a nondrinker in Crestwood, Kentucky, hosts the *Thriving Alcohol-Free* podcast to help others find tasty nonalcoholic beverages. "My whole message is that the fun is not over," she says. "There are still good things to drink." *—Whitney Matheson*

MEMBER CHECK LIST

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BREAKFAST ON THE GO

1 ENSURE COMPLETE MILK CHOCOLATE SHAKE

VS

1 BLUEBERRY MUFFIN*

30g PROTEIN

25 VITAMINS & MINERALS

5g PROTEIN

3 VITAMINS & MINERALS

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HOT DEALS

3 Ways To Save On Your Next Road Trip

Summer isn't over yet. You can still experience "Summer Lovin" when you use these tips to save on your next road trip vacation.

1 Use Your AARP Member Benefits Your AARP membership offers hundreds of travel discounts on car rentals, hotels, vacation packages, restaurants, gas, auto services, and entertainment. Review your benefits before planning your next trip to maximize savings.

2 Don't Skip Your Car Prep Avoid costly repairs on the road when you have your vehicle serviced before you head out. Don't forget to check your tires' air pressure for optimal fuel efficiency.

3 Get a Free Auto Insurance Quote You could save hundreds on car insurance through **AARP® Auto Insurance from The Hartford.** Members can get exclusive savings — like up to 10% off their premium — plus discounts for requesting a quote online or for bundling auto and home policies. No-cost, no-obligation quotes are available.

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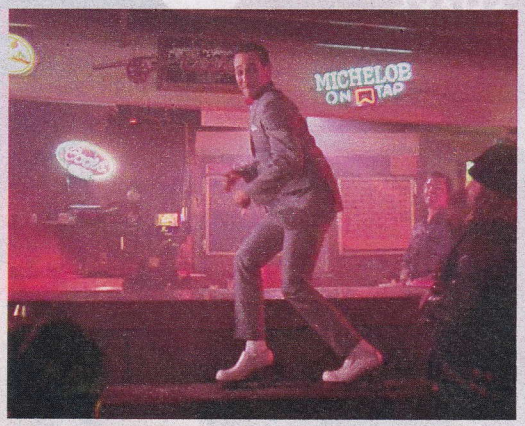
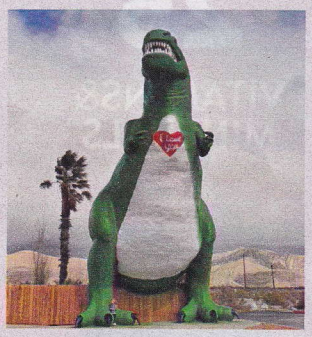
YOUR 'PEE-WEE' ADVENTURE AWAITS

AUGUST 9 MARKS 40 years since the release of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, the Tim Burton–directed comedy starring Paul Reubens as a man searching for what he loves most: his bicycle. If you're near one of these locations, grab a bow tie and go pay homage to this Gen X classic.



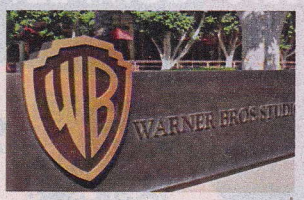
THE BIKER BAR *Santa Clarita, California*
Have a burrito at Mi Tierra Mexican Food & Market, which is where the film's biker bar scenes were shot—and where Pee-wee did the "Tequila" dance in his white platform shoes.

GIANT DINOSAURS *Cabazon, California*
After Reubens died in 2023, this roadside attraction's 65-foot-tall *Tyrannosaurus rex*, featured in the film, was temporarily repainted with a gray suit and a red bow tie.



THE ALAMO *San Antonio*
"There's no basement at the Alamo!" a giggling tour guide tells a disappointed and embarrassed Pee-wee in the film. While this is technically true, there is a basement next door, beneath the Alamo gift shop.

WARNER BROS. STUDIO *Burbank, California*
Tour the studio lot where Pee-wee evades security and encounters Godzilla, Santa Claus and the band Twisted Sister.



PEE-WEE'S BICYCLE *Pittsburgh*
Visitors to Bicycle Heaven, in the Chateau neighborhood, can see one of the 14 customized red-and-white Schwinn DX Cruisers made for the film.

BIKE AND CLOWN *Volo, Illinois*
The Volo Museum houses many famous vehicles, including one of the Pee-wee bikes, this one autographed by Reubens. (It sits next to a creepy clown similar to the one in the film.) —*Whitney Matheson*

From top: Photofest; Cabazon Dinosaurs; Alamy; Kristy Graver/Pittsburgh Museum; Getty Images; Volo Museum

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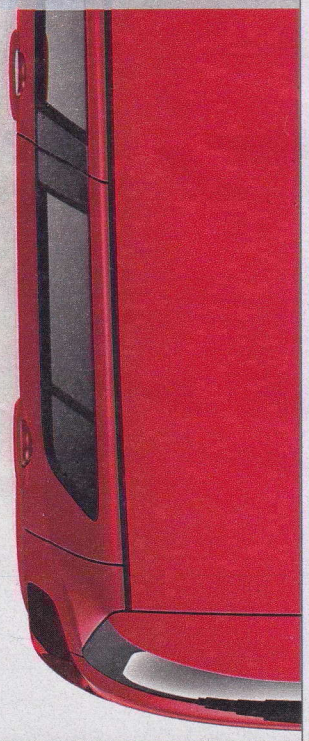

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Jamie Lee Curtis photographed by Andrew Eccles in Los Angeles on April 8, 2025

The Liberation of Jamie Lee Curtis

At 66, the actor has built a life brimming with career success, deep relationships and singular fulfillment—something her younger self would never have imagined. The key? 'Freedom,' she says

By Meg Grant

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW ECCLES

The hard things break. The soft things bend. The stubborn ones batter themselves against all that is immovable. The flexible adapt to what is before them. Of course, we are all hard and soft, stubborn and flexible, and so we all break until we learn to bend.

—The Book of Awakening *by Mark Nepo*

JAMIE LEE CURTIS is bending and twisting her 66-year-old body to fit beneath a postmodern wicker chaise longue. For our photo shoot in Los Angeles, she emerged from hair and make-up an hour before schedule—this is a woman who has grown confident in her own skin. Even in mid-contortion, she secures the buttons on her blouse and chats with photographer Andrew

Eccles about how much and how little of her body should be shown in his photos to our 39 million readers.

"I am going to make spider veins very sexy," she jokes. Then, in all seriousness, she continues: "Look, I wouldn't want to be any other age than I am now—but there isn't a person here who hasn't looked in the mirror and thought, *Whoa!* We all have our top three and bottom three assets. The bottom three would include my cankles."

But, in truth, she's not that concerned. Curtis says that, typically, after a shock-and-awe experience in front of the mirror, she laughs and then goes and plays with her dog. "I have really let go of my vanity," she tells me later. "I am free, totally free."

For an actor, that is a remarkable statement. But this one believes that without that freedom, she could not be doing the creative work she is doing today. And, boy, is she doing *a lot* of it. Since her 2023 best supporting actress Oscar win for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, which she describes as "mind-blowing," Curtis' Hollywood career has exploded with opportunity in an industry where many 60-something women are fading away by face-saving choice and a lack of job prospects. On the heels of her dramatic performance in the 2024 film *The Last Showgirl* and a recurring role in the critically acclaimed TV series *The Bear*, Curtis costars with Lindsay Lohan again in *Freakier Friday*, a sequel to the 2003 smash hit, out this month.

Coming this fall is *The Lost Bus*, which Curtis coproduced, starring Matthew McConaughey and based on the true story of a bus driver who rescued 22 students during California's deadly 2018 Camp Fire. (She acquired the film rights to it after hearing an August 2021 NPR story about the events.) In December, she will appear in the James L. Brooks movie *Ella McCay* with Woody Harrelson. And next year, she will costar with Nicole Kidman in the Prime Video series *Scarpetta*, based on Patricia Cornwell's series of novels, which Curtis acquired to produce back in early 2021. A second season for the series is already planned.

Additionally, Curtis has about a dozen film and TV projects in development. Indeed, she has bought a lot with that freedom, and it's a freedom, she points out, that she has earned. "Freedom is the goal," she repeats. "Mental freedom, physical freedom, spiritual freedom, love freedom, artistic freedom, political freedom."

Jamie Lee Curtis Inspo

13 things that inspire the actor today

MUSIC

"It's a Hard Life Wherever You Go" *by Nanci Griffith*
"A beautiful bit of poetry and music to remind us of the power of hatred."

"Alive" *by Sia*
"A ballad of survival that lifts me every time."

"California" *by Joni Mitchell*
"I went to boarding school on the East Coast in my senior year of high school, and this was my anthem of homesickness and love and appreciation of the greatest state in our union."

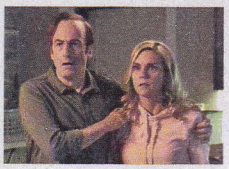
BOOKS

East of Eden *by John Steinbeck*
"There are passages in this book that have shaped my life."

Special Topics in Calamity Physics *by Marisha Pessl*
"It contains the phrase that I connect to most profoundly: 'Life hinges on a couple of seconds you never see coming. And what you decide in those few seconds determines everything from then on.... And you have no idea what you'll do until you're there.'"

TV

Better Call Saul
"Writing + acting."



Girls
"Brilliance all around."

Transparent
"New and bold and brave."

Succession
"Boom."

The Bear
"Obvi. I had never seen anything like it, and as soon as I heard Sugar ask Carmen if he had talked to their mom yet, in that moment I knew I would play her."

MOVIES

The Godfather
"A perfect movie."

The Godfather Part II
"A more perfect movie."

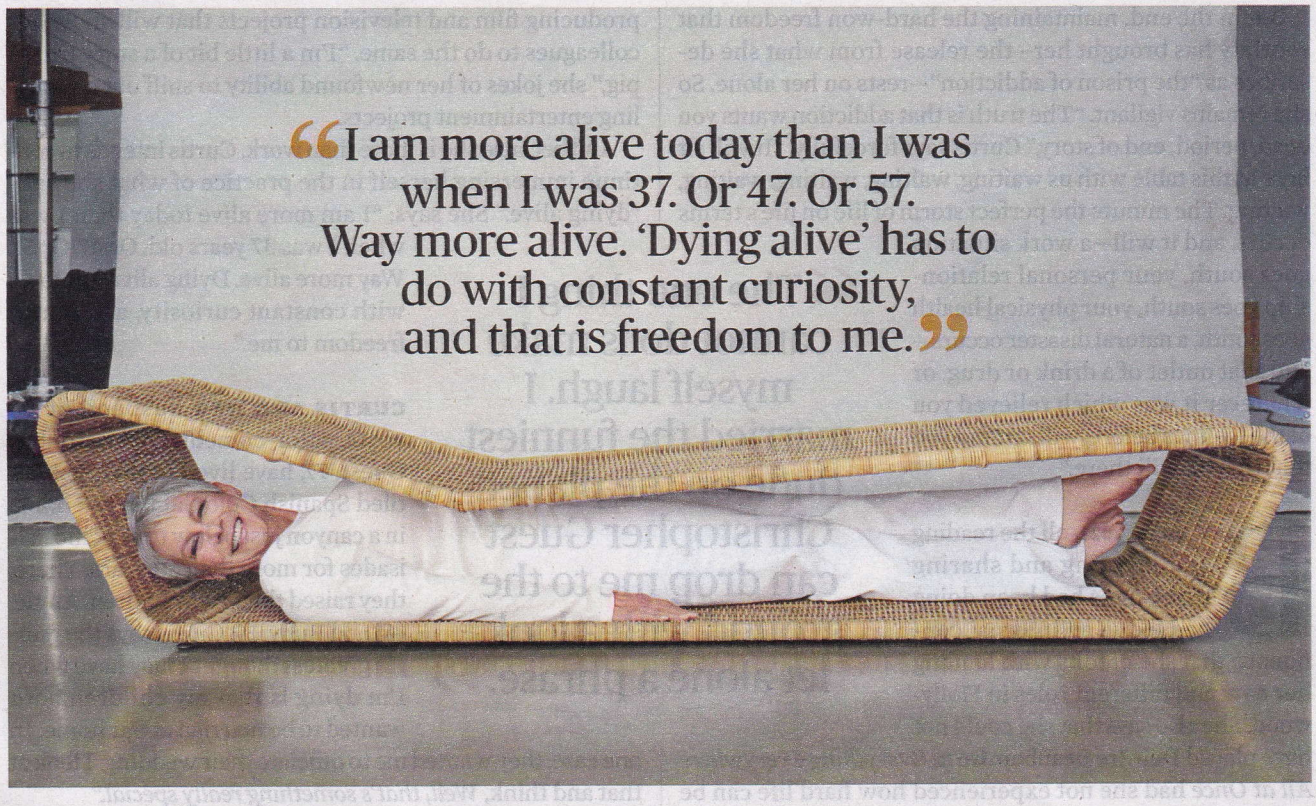
This Is Spinal Tap
"Duh."

Previous spread: Producer: Cat Cook Knox; wardrobe stylist: Jane Ross; prop stylist: James Lear/11th House Agency; hairstylist: Sean James/Aim Artists; makeup artist: Grace Ahn/Day One Studio

REWIND FOUR years to when, in mid-2021, I sat down with Curtis for her last AARP THE MAGAZINE cover story. We were just emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, and Curtis had spent the previous 14 months in physical isolation but in mental overdrive. She'd looked her mortality in the eye during that time and decided to do something significant with the time she had left.

Considering she is the daughter of actors Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh, Curtis had a fairly conventional childhood in upper-class Beverly Hills, thanks in part to the influence of her stepfather Robert Brandt, Leigh's fourth husband, who was a stockbroker. Nonetheless, she landed on the acting circuit herself in the breakout role of Laurie in the horror film *Halloween* when she wasn't yet 20. That led to a hit-and-miss Hollywood career (mostly horror and comedy roles) for nearly two decades until, in her 40s, she started telling people she would be retiring.

"I was raised in show business, a business that is ageist, misogynist and pigeonholing," she says. "I've watched


“I am more alive today than I was when I was 37. Or 47. Or 57. Way more alive. ‘Dying alive’ has to do with constant curiosity, and that is freedom to me.”

the sad reality when show business no longer wants you. I watched it with my parents, who went from the height of their intense fame to nobody wanting them anymore. My plan was to step away before you no longer asked for me."

Then, 26 years ago, something happened to Curtis that changed all that—something that let her break out of the "boxes" she says the industry kept her parents in. And it had nothing to do with show business: It was sobriety.

The story of the actor quitting her addiction to prescription painkillers and alcohol is by now widely known. Just starting her fifth decade, she was led to her decision by several moments of self-awareness: recognizing herself while reading the memoir of an addict and receiving a warning from a healer friend.

There was no catastrophic crash. "I was what they call a high bottom," Curtis says. Nonetheless, she sought help by attending meetings at a Presbyterian church (which burned down earlier this year in the Palisades Fire near her home in Santa Monica). Though her mother was a regular reader of *Daily Word*, a magazine collection of spiritual teachings, and her father was Jewish, Curtis was raised without religion. "I went to no organized religious groupings," she says. "I never had any religious affiliation at all until I got sober." But upon finding sobriety, she also found, to her surprise, a connection to God. "What grouped sobriety requires is a belief in something bigger than you," she explains.

Today, she notes more than once that the deity she recognizes "is a God of my understanding. There's no dogma attached to it. I really don't know what God is, and I don't have to be able to qualify or quantify that."

As with so much of Jamie Lee Curtis at this point in her life, her beliefs, her practices and her choices are intentional and, always, very much her own.

She has arrived at this place in part because with sobriety also came community for Curtis, who until then had been a largely solitary person: "I didn't know when I got sober that I was going to meet others who faced the same demons, who were in the same prison and who found the same salvation." She then adds one simple explanatory note about her recovery relationships: "They are the ones who understand."

Curtis has made her appreciation for shared experience and empathy a driving force in her life. A morning person, rising between 4 and 5 a.m., she spends her first hours awake corresponding with "hundreds of people," often using her Instagram account to share encouragement. She is a voracious reader and especially favors materials containing life lessons, such as *The Book of Awakening* by Mark Nepo, which she turns to daily. She also delights in her ability as a public figure to curate and celebrate the teachings, learnings and experiences of writers, musicians, podcasters, filmmakers and others whose works speak to her. (See "Jamie Lee Curtis Inspo," page 32.) →

Curtis winning the AARP Movies for Grownups Career Achievement Award at the 2023 gala in Beverly Hills, California

This spread: credits on page 73

But in the end, maintaining the hard-won freedom that sobriety has brought her—the release from what she describes as "the prison of addiction"—rests on her alone. So she remains vigilant. "The truth is that addiction wants you dead, period, end of story," Curtis says forcefully. "It will sit here at this table with us waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting. The minute the perfect storm of life on life's terms occurs, and it will—a work situation goes south, your personal relationship goes south, your physical health goes south, a natural disaster occurs—and that outlet of a drink or drug, or whatever it was which relieved you of the feelings before, will remind you that they're still there."

> "The one thing I cannot do is make myself laugh. I married the funniest dude on the planet. Christopher Guest can drop me to the ground with a look, let alone a phrase."

BY LATE 2021, all the reading and learning and sharing that Curtis had been doing had led to an internal confidence that she credits with landing her new and different roles in Hollywood. She also says that she could not have played Deirdre Beaubeirdre in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* had she not experienced how hard life can be and found the freedom to be undaunted by that. Still, she "never, ever, ever, ever, ever thought" she would find herself seated with other major nominees in the front row of Hollywood's Dolby Theatre at the 2023 Academy Awards. Her voice breaks when she talks about her also-nominated costars Michelle Yeoh and Ke Huy Quan, who, like her, had been in the business for years while contending with lukewarm recognition. (Yeoh won best actor for the film.) She mentions her friend Demi Moore, nominated for the first time for an Oscar earlier this year for playing an aging celebrity in *The Substance*, a performance that, ironically, Curtis says allowed Moore to tell the world something Curtis deeply understands: "I am more than you think."

So, as she approaches her 67th birthday (she often mistakenly says she is already 67, unconsciously aging herself, which is hilariously rare for a woman in her line of work), Curtis intends to keep putting herself out there as an actor ready to take on complex roles. She also intends to keep producing film and television projects that will allow her colleagues to do the same. "I'm a little bit of a story truffle pig," she jokes of her newfound ability to sniff out compelling entertainment projects.

And because she is more than work, Curtis intends to continue immersing herself in the practice of what she calls "dying alive." She says: "I am more alive today than I was when I was 37 years old. Or 47. Or 57. Way more alive. Dying alive has to do with constant curiosity, and that is freedom to me."

CURTIS AND HER husband of 40 years, actor-comedian Christopher Guest, 77, have lived in their barrel-tiled Spanish Colonial Revival home in a canyon just below the Pacific Palisades for more than 30 years. There, they raised their two children, Annie, 38, and Ruby, 29. Curtis says the "single greatest thought I may have when I'm dying is that my children both wanted to be married at our home. In one case, they wanted me to officiate their wedding. I look at that and think, *Well, that's something really special.*"

The home is surrounded by a yard shaded by several huge live oaks. Curtis says that when she and Guest were evacuated in January due to the threat of the Palisades Fire, she was more worried about losing the oaks than anything. In the end, the home suffered only smoke damage, and, since it is undergoing restoration, she and Guest are living in a much smaller house next door, which Curtis has, in the past, used as her production office.

On this morning a few days after her photo shoot, Curtis and I are sitting in that temporary refuge at a glass dining table adjacent to a living room that features a floor-to-ceiling limestone fireplace. The space is warm but not overly bright; a throw drapes a modular recliner; books are stacked nearby. Curtis' rescue pup Runi (short for Karuna, which means "compassion" in Sanskrit) and her granddog Bella (a yellow Lab rescue that Curtis and Guest are watching while Annie and her husband are away) pad and stretch and nap on the clean, low-pile carpeting under our

Jamie Lee: Coming Soon

Following acclaimed appearances in the TV series *The Bear* and in the 2024 movie *The Last Showgirl*, Curtis has a slew of other gigs on the near horizon.

IN THEATERS NOW

Freakier Friday Costars with Lindsay Lohan in this sequel to the 2003 smash hit *Freaky Friday*.

THIS FALL

The Lost Bus Coproduced this true story of a heroic bus driver, played by Matthew McConaughey, who saved many lives during California's Camp Fire in 2018.

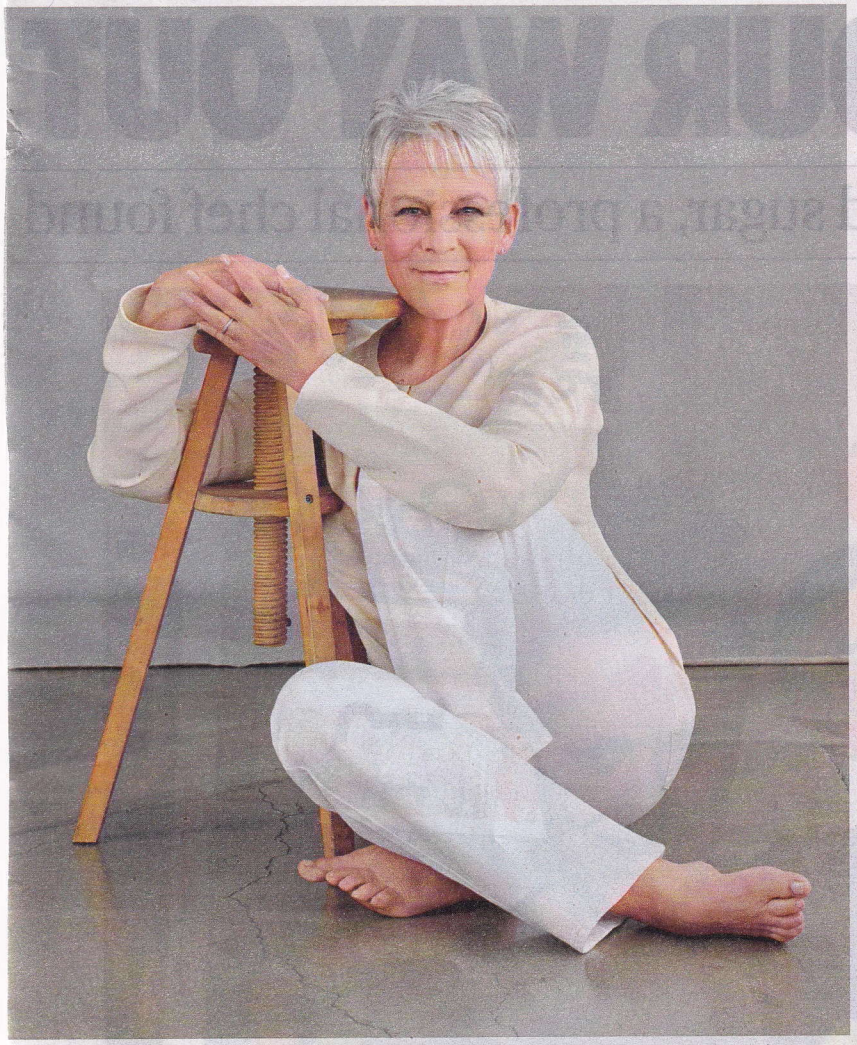
DECEMBER

Ella McCay Appears in the James L. Brooks comedy-drama with Woody Harrelson, fellow *Bear* cast member Ayo Edebiri and several other Hollywood stars.

2026

Scarpetta Costars with Nicole Kidman in the Prime Video series based on Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta novels, which Curtis acquired to produce in early 2021. —*M.G.*

Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures/Everett Collection



WANT MORE JAMIE LEE?
For an exclusive behind-the-scenes video of Curtis, visit aarp.org/JamieLeeCurtis or scan this code with your phone camera.

bare feet (no shoes permitted inside this house).

Guest is also somewhere in the house, Curtis acknowledges with a lowered voice while indicating that, for his sake, she wants to slightly limit our interview time to be respectful of him. "There's a point when I have to stop the machine a bit," she says, noting that Guest is less comfortable being in the public eye than she is. When I ask what the secret is to their long marriage, she says, "'Forever.' That's the term, right? That's what you've vowed to."

She then reflects and says that the older she gets, the more she realizes how different she and Guest are as individuals. She talks about her independence and her self-sufficiency, her ability to fasten things with screws and to locate the gas shutoff valve, for example. "But the one thing I cannot do for myself is to make myself laugh," she says, and she values humor as a lifesaving trait. "I married the funniest dude on the planet. Christopher Guest can drop me to the ground with a look, let alone a phrase. It can be annoying to be married to somebody who can use his humor to disarm any natural rage that you might have, but it's also an amazing blessing."

Curtis fits comfortably into the domestic scene surrounding us. She seems more at ease with running a home than any movie or TV star I've spoken to in more than 30 years of interviewing celebrities. She still cooks dinner for her husband most nights. A gal who never had any training as a gardener or even a house plant cultivator, she grows beautiful roses—Lagerfelds, which are a gorgeous shade of lavender and not always responsive to the unschooled horticulturist. She also does yoga to maintain balance and flexibility, which she calls "the two cornerstones to aging."

She likes the idea of "shedding": divesting, getting rid of the old. She and Guest were seriously thinking about downsizing to a much smaller home when the California fires erupted, but the practicality, financial and otherwise, of selling their home, buying a new one and starting over led them to decide to stay where they are. Which is not to say Curtis plans to refurnish every room after their house has been "de-smoked." She plans to keep some of the rooms' doors closed and "to leave a smaller footprint in that house," she says, "which is an old idea that we will use as a new idea. I spend my days thinking old idea, new idea, and I want new ideas."

Luckily, Curtis does not suffer from a lack of energy. She wakes up in those predawn hours and goes, goes, goes, as she always has. That is, until about 4 or 5 p.m., when the sun begins to fade. At about that time, she'll turn to her husband and make what has become a routine gesture, drawing her hand across her throat, signaling, "I'm tapped out." She explains, "I don't know if it's a childhood trauma, and I don't really care, but in my opinion nothing good happens at night." Curtis' friends all know that she doesn't do dinner; she does brunch. She says she'd love to see Bruce Springsteen live—"I'd sit there for six freakin' hours for Bruce!"—but only if he'd start a concert at 1 p.m. (For more on Bruce, see page 62.) She takes "delicious" naps only if work events require her to be out at night. Otherwise, she's in bed by 8 p.m.

So as we part, I am reminded of a story she told me earlier. She once met someone who told her there were two kinds of people. One wakes up in the morning and says, "Good morning, God." The other wakes up and says, "Good God, it's morning!" She says she's long been the former—all so she can wake up and do it over again. ■

Meg Grant, an entertainment journalist based in Los Angeles, is the celebrity liaison director for AARP. She profiled Jamie Lee Curtis in the August/September 2021 issue of AARP THE MAGAZINE.

COOK YOUR WAY OUT

Faced with high blood sugar, a professional chef found

Chef Bob Blumer's low-carb strategies tossed prediabetes to the curb.

OF PREDIABETES

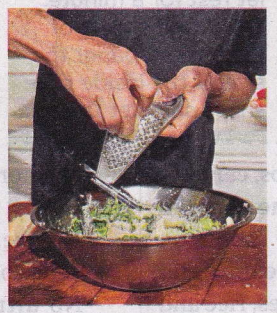
By BOB BLUMER

Photographs by ROGER KISBY

the remedy in his own kitchen. Here's how you can too!

"YOU ARE PREDIABETIC." Those are three words I never expected to read. After all, I've always kept myself relatively trim—at the time of my diagnosis, I was carrying 186 pounds on a 5-foot-11-inch body. At 67, I'd exercised like a fiend my whole life, and as a chef and former Food Network host, I ate really well—or so I thought. But there they were, three words scrawled by my doctor, next to a slowly ascending line on my hemoglobin A1c chart breaking through the prediabetes threshold: an average blood sugar level of 5.7 percent.

I had never given a moment of thought to prediabetes. Chances are, neither have you: More than 1 in 3 American adults—approximately 98 million people—have prediabetes, and 80 percent of them don't know it.



"Prediabetes" sounds relatively innocent—it's just a warning sign, right? But the reality is a bit darker. Up to 70 percent of people diagnosed with prediabetes will go on to develop the full-blown disease. And prediabetes is an express elevator to heart disease. Half of all people with prediabetes who don't take steps to address their condition will go on to develop cardiovascular disease within the next five years.

Serious stuff. But my doctor's advice was vague: "Watch your sugar and white carb intake" was about all he had to offer.

I decided to fully educate myself on prediabetes and use my skills as a chef to cook my way free of it.

WHAT THE HECK *IS* PREDIABETES?

It helps to think of prediabetes as a long-smoldering ember that may or may not turn into a full-blown fire.

When we eat carbohydrates—macronutrients found in everything from apples to chocolate cake—our digestive system breaks them down into simple forms of sugar, primarily glucose, which is then absorbed through the small intestine and into the bloodstream. As the level of sugar in our blood increases, the pancreas releases insulin, a hormone that helps cells absorb the glucose and either burn it off as energy or store it in our muscles and liver for later use.

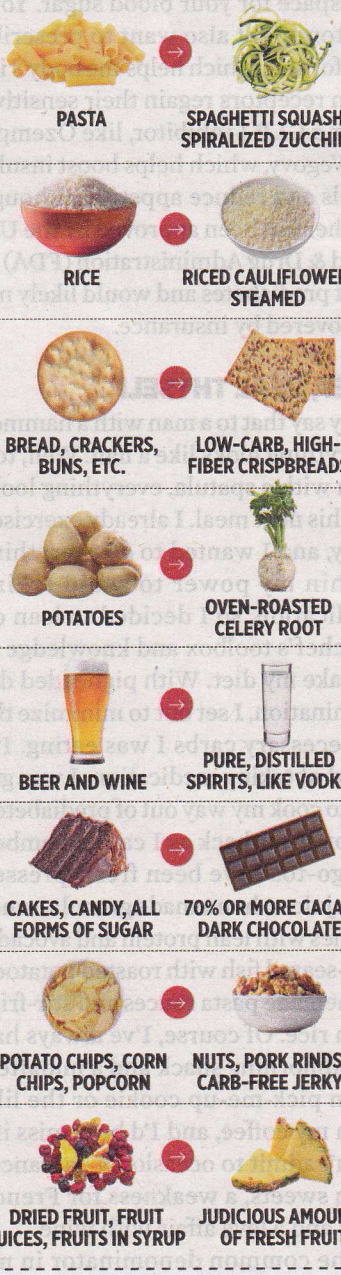
Carbs are digested quickly, while fat, protein and fiber move through us more slowly. So the higher the carb content of a meal, and the lower the fat, protein and fiber content, the faster those carbs are absorbed, and the faster they cause our blood sugar to spike.

As we age, and when we eat lots and lots of carbohydrates, the pancreas grows a little tired and lazy; it's no longer as effective at picking up on blood sugar rushes and releasing insulin to manage them. In addition, our cells can develop insulin resistance, which means they become less effective at reacting to insulin's orders. A less-active pancreas, less-sensitive insulin receptors and a continued onslaught of carbs lead to elevated levels of blood sugar, which can lead to prediabetes and, eventually, type 2 diabetes.

Being overweight has a similar

8 TOP CARB-CUTTING SWAPS

Sub in these low-carb options for carbohydrate-rich staples to help reduce your prediabetes risk.



Getty Images (15); Stocksy (chocolate)

effect. While the pudginess you see is likely to be around your midsection, weight gain happens throughout the body, especially in the liver and muscles—the very same storage facilities we're supposed to be using for excess sugar. The more fat we have in those locales, the less room there is to store blood sugar.

The standard advice is pretty straightforward: Eat fewer carbs so you have less blood sugar to store, and exercise more to lose weight and build muscle—thereby creating storage space for your blood sugar. Your doctor might also want to prescribe metformin, which helps the body's insulin receptors regain their sensitivity, or a GLP-1 inhibitor, like Ozempic or Wegovy, which helps boost insulin levels and reduce appetite, although neither has been approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to fight prediabetes and would likely not be covered by insurance.

CHEF, HEAL THYSELF

They say that to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Well, to a man with a spatula, everything looks like his next meal. I already exercised daily, and I wanted to do everything within my power to avoid taking medication, so I decided to lean on my chef's toolbox and knowledge to remake my diet. With pigheaded determination, I set out to minimize the unnecessary carbs I was eating. Instead of taking medication, I was going to cook my way out of prediabetes.

For as far back as I can remember, my go-tos have been fresh-pressed fruit juices, homemade granola, sandwiches with lean protein and avocado, pan-seared fish with roasted potatoes, homemade pasta sauces and stir-fries with rice. Of course, I've always had a midmorning snack and a midafternoon pick-me-up cookie or the like with my coffee, and I'd be remiss if I didn't admit to occasional dalliances with sweets, a weakness for French fries and a love affair with wine.

The common denominator in my "healthy" diet? Carbs, carbs, carbs!

When I penciled out the carbs in my diet—by reading the labels on the packaged foods I was eating and googling foods like potatoes, rice and pasta—I realized my average daily count was close to double the FDA's guideline of 275 grams. No wonder I was prediabetic!

Eliminating the sweets, reducing empty carbs like fries, and cutting back (some!) on the wine would help. But most of the carbohydrates I was eating came from "healthy" foods—fruit juices, vegetable-laden pasta and rice dishes, and my crusty, home-baked bread. And here's the thing: I liked the way I ate. I wasn't about to go on some fat-based keto program or a paleo diet that had me foraging around the freezer for elk loin. Instead, I established a few simple guidelines:

- No more than 100 grams of carbs per day
- No weird diets or depressing stretches of hunger
- No ultraprocessed or prepackaged foods, even if they were labeled "keto-friendly" (many still contain hidden carbs)

Indeed, I would change how I ate, but not how well I ate.

Three months later—after equal measures of altered eating habits, creative cooking and self-discipline—I had turned the trajectory of my A1c graph upside down and, in the process, effortlessly dropped 15 pounds, returning to the weight I was in my 40s. Three months after that, my A1c level dropped further, to well within the comfort zone, and my new weight held steady—due solely to a radical reset of what I ate.

RECIPE

SEED CRACKERS

Two words describe these protein-packed, low-carb crackers: insanely addictive.

PREP/COOK TIME: 45 MINUTES

YIELD: 24-30 CRACKERS

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup pumpkin seeds
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds
- ¼ cup & 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 2 tablespoons flaxseed
- 3 tablespoons arrowroot flour
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup boiling water
- Salt and pepper

Optional: chile flakes, granulated garlic, granulated onion, fennel seeds and your favorite spices

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Preheat oven to 300°F—ideally on the convection setting.
2 In a large bowl, combine seeds and arrowroot. Mix thoroughly. Add olive oil and mix thoroughly. Add a generous amount of salt and pepper, as well as any spices. Add water and mix thoroughly, then let rest for a minute.
3 Cut two sheets of parchment paper the size of the inside of a sheet pan. Set the first sheet on a solid, flat countertop and spoon the seed mixture onto the center. Cover with the second sheet, then use a rolling pin to spread the mixture into a thin, even layer the thickness of a pumpkin seed.
4 Carefully transfer the parchment onto a sheet pan and slowly peel off the top sheet. Bake for about 35–40 minutes, or until crackers are a light golden brown. If you don't have a convection oven, rotate the pan after 20 minutes.
5 Let crackers cool, then break into 1½-inch pieces and store in an airtight container. They'll last for a couple of weeks.

Nutrients per serving (6 crackers)
205 calories, 5 g protein, 8 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 17 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 105 mg sodium

I'm here to tell you, you can do this. Here's the way to get started:

HOW TO COOK AWAY YOUR PREDIABETES

→ GET TESTED: Ask your doctor for an A1c test so that you have a benchmark. Since it takes three months to move the needle, book yourself a follow-up blood test in three months, and dig in for the short haul.

→ KNOW YOUR CARBS: Get familiar with which foods and drinks are naturally high in carbs—and the difference between "good" (complex) carbs and "bad" (simple) carbs. In a nutshell, the good ones are whole foods that contain lots of fiber, which slows the speed at which the body breaks down carbs and turns them into sugar. The bad ones are refined carbs, like flour, white rice and sugar—and everything made with them.

→ KEEP COUNT: Maintain a rough running tally of the carbs you consume daily. Aim for a maximum of 100 grams per day—that's equivalent to about two slices of whole wheat bread, two medium-size bananas or one large potato. At the same time, don't lose sight of the FDA's guideline of 2,000 to 2,500 calories per day.

→ AVOID THE CARBOHYDRATE BOMBS: Stay away from potatoes, rice (even brown rice), anything made with refined white flour (pasta, bread, doughnuts, muffins) and all processed foods (cereal, granola bars, snack foods). Also beware of anything containing sugar or high-fructose corn syrup, including all sweetened drinks (iced teas, coffee drinks, sodas, sports drinks), virtually all desserts, candy and so on. (All your favorite things. I get it. Believe me, I feel your pain.)

→ SEGUE FROM CARB-HEAVY TO PROTEIN-RICH FOODS: Lean on lean proteins (fish, chicken, lean red meat, tofu), dairy (unsweetened yogurt and kefir, hard cheeses) and eggs. Studies have determined that transitioning to a low-carb, high-protein diet can have additional benefits as we age, such as increased bone (CONTINUED ON PAGE 72)

RECIPE

THE ULTIMATE LOW-CARB CAESAR SALAD

A well-made Caesar has the kick of fresh garlic, the richness of an egg yolk, the zing of lemon juice and the nuttiness of Parmigiano-Reggiano. I've turned up the intensity with a tablespoon of miso paste and cut carbs by replacing croutons with crumbled pork rinds.

PREP/COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large head of romaine, chopped, *or*
- 4 heads of Little Gem lettuce, quartered through the stem, *or*
- 2 bunches Tuscan black kale (a.k.a. cavolo nero, lacinato kale, dinosaur kale), stemmed and chiffonaded
- 3 large garlic cloves, crushed
- 5 anchovies, *or*
- 1 tablespoon anchovy paste
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon miso paste
- 1 egg yolk*
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 5 tablespoons light olive oil, or any natural oil
- ½ cup (about 2 ounces) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 1 palmful of pork rinds, crumbled

INSTRUCTIONS

1 To a blender add garlic, anchovies, mustard, miso, egg yolk, lemon juice, vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper. Puree.

2 With the blender on, very slowly drizzle in oil. Taste for salt, acid balance and seasonings, and adjust if desired. Reserve.

3 To a large bowl add your chosen greens and half of the dressing. Toss thoroughly. Add the Parmigiano-Reggiano (holding back a bit to garnish) and the pork rinds (holding back a bit to garnish). Toss again and add more dressing as needed until greens are generously dressed—but not too wet. Finish with a dusting of Parmigiano-Reggiano and pork rinds. Serve immediately.

** Raw eggs should be consumed with caution.*

ADVANCE WORK

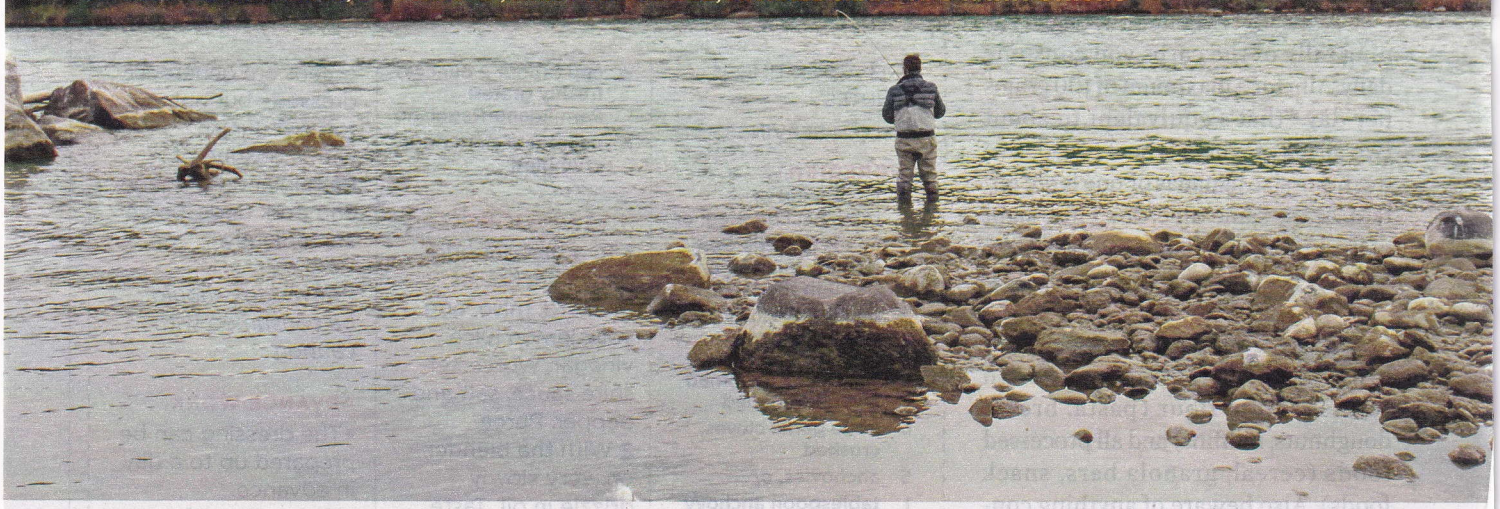
- The dressing can be prepared up to a day in advance.
- Wait to toss the salad with the dressing until just before serving.
- To make as a dinner entrée, add a cubed avocado, cherry tomatoes and a cup of shredded chicken or cooked shrimp.

Nutrients per serving
266 calories, 8 g protein, 3 g carbohydrates, <1 g fiber, 25 g fat, 64 mg cholesterol, 892 mg sodium

Retired and Ready to Roam

My first big vacation after the 9-to-5 grind

AS TOLD TO AMY ALIPIO, ED CONDRAN, MAISY FERNANDEZ, MICHAEL GRANT AND KATHY STRONG



When work responsibilities end, many retirees plan a great escape. A recent online poll by MassMutual reported that travel is the top objective of Americans approaching retirement: Seventy-six percent of respondents said that's what they most look forward to. The travel industry has even coined a term for that first big post-work trip: the "retirementmoon." For many, it's more than just a getaway; it's a long-awaited adventure, a reward and sometimes even a dream decades in the making. Looking for inspiration? Check out these travel tales from recent retirees.

A FISHING EXPEDITION

Five Days in the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska

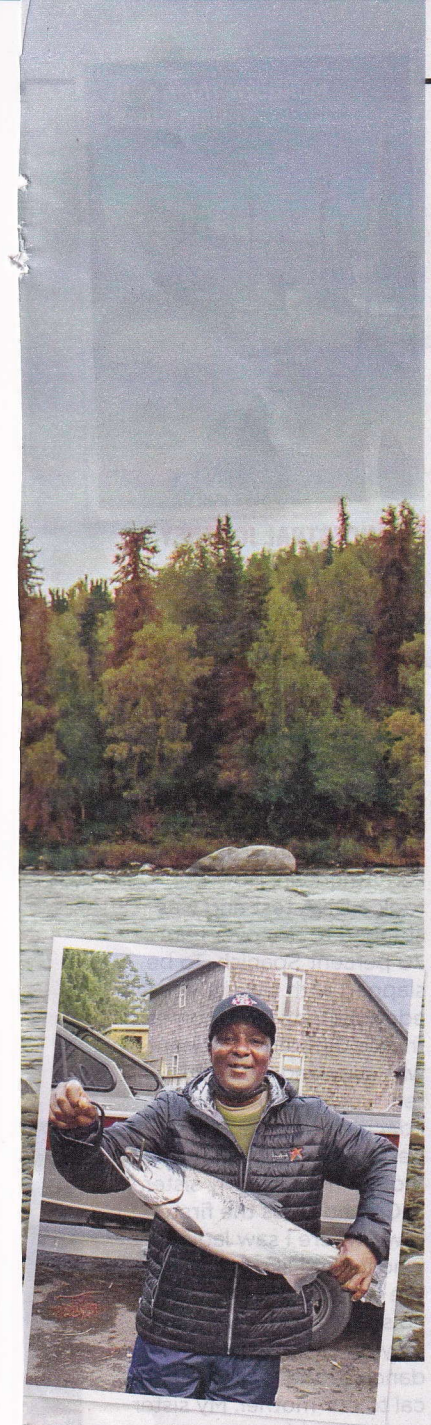
Don Atkins, 61, Kirkland, Washington
Retired: 2021, medical sales

I GOT HOOKED on fishing as a 12-year-old kid, even though I didn't catch anything during my first time out. After a 40-minute battle, I had nearly caught a 60-pound salmon, but the massive fish snapped the pole. I never forgot the thrill of hooking a fish.

I traveled to Alaska for work for years and always wanted to go fishing there. When I retired, I went fly-fishing with a bunch of guys. I caught 150 pounds of fish! I'm not exaggerating when I say that I caught a fish every 15 minutes. I felt like a kid again.

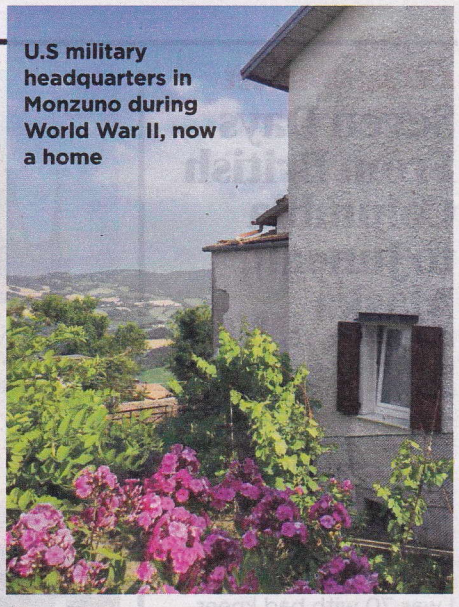
The Kenai is stunning. It's an hour's drive into the

Photo credits on page 73



Atkins, showing off a king salmon he caught on the trip to Kenai, Alaska

wilderness. You get to see grizzly bears and moose just walking around. One of the guides told us that a grizzly was above us on a bluff 30 yards away. We got out of there, and that guide was right on the money. I took a photo of the bear from the boat, and I didn't even use a telephoto lens.



U.S military headquarters in Monzuno during World War II, now a home

WHERE DAD FOUGHT

A 65-Day Trip Through Europe

Mary Terkelsen, 74, Clovis, California
Retired: 2008, teacher

IT HAD ALWAYS been a dream to retrace my dad's World War II steps in Italy. We were also interested in visiting my husband Gary's relatives in Denmark and seeing friends in Norway. We also decided to visit as many countries in between as we could.

The highlight was when we arrived in Monzuno, Italy. It's the village where a bomb hit just feet from my dad and where he earned his Purple Heart. We walked around the village, and a man directed us to the mayor's office, where they could speak English. I told them my dad's story. The office workers were coming up to me and thanking me for my dad's service. It brought tears to my eyes. One young woman said, "Your dad's service helped rescue our parents and grandparents from the Nazis." The mayor's wife took us to her parents' home, where we had dinner. We found out that the house had been a Nazi headquarters, and then it became the American headquarters when they got the Nazis out. So we were literally walking in my father's footsteps.

A BLUEGRASS QUEST

An Eight-Day Road Trip to Nashville

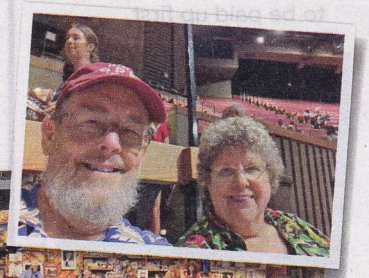
Stephen Kranz, 67, Westminster, Maryland
Retired: 2023, attorney

I WAS INTRODUCED to bluegrass at a club while in college at Temple University in Philadelphia and have been hooked ever since. It's the first-person storytelling, the instrumentation, the harmonies. It's just good, well-written songs. I wanted to experience it in a city famous for live music.

So my wife, Michelle, and I climbed into our Dodge Durango and drove about 1,500 miles through five states to Nashville.

On our trip, one of the first stops was the Carter Family Fold in Virginia to see bluegrass act Russell Moore & IIIrd Tyme Out. We had seen them before, but what was unusual here was that people streamed out of the stands and did flatfoot dancing.

In Nashville, we caught Dailey & Vincent. We'd seen them at bluegrass festivals, but to watch them perform at the Grand Ole Opry was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The acoustics in that place were just fabulous.



Dancers at the Carter Family Fold in Virginia; *above*, at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville

A JET SKI ADVENTURE

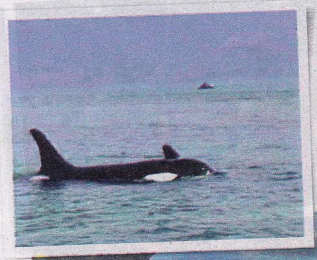
Seven Days From British Columbia to Juneau, Alaska

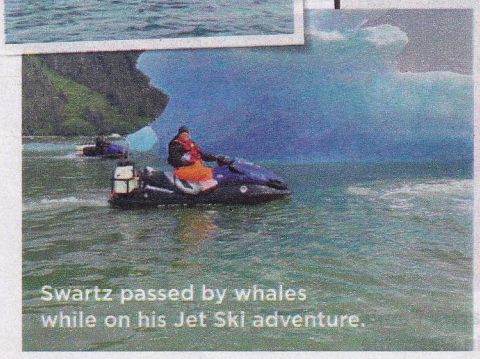
Don Swartz, 76, Bakersfield, California
Retired: 2016, district sales manager

WHEN I FELL into the water at the start of a 650-mile Jet Ski trip to Juneau, I said to my adventure guide, "Take a picture!" I was 70 with bad knees and was embarking on an excursion that not many people have experienced. I'm also diabetic, but I love adventure and enjoy making memories.

We traveled the 650 miles in seven days. That part of Alaska is a special place. I was so close to whales that I could smell their breath as they sprayed us. It smells like krill! And then there was LeConte Glacier, which is stunning. I'll never forget navigating around the ice and just staring at the waterfalls.

It would be great to do the trip again, but my wife says my life insurance has to be paid up first.





Swartz passed by whales while on his Jet Ski adventure.

Prague, Czech Republic

A WOMEN-ONLY TRIP

10 Days by Train to Prague, Vienna, Budapest

Carolyn Cryan, 66, Chatham, Massachusetts
Retired: 2024, health care executive

WHEN I HAD GONE on trips before, often my boss would ask me, "Would you mind just dialing in to this conference call?" I always felt obligated to check my email, check my phone. It's such a difference when you're retired.

When I was in Prague, sitting at a sidewalk café with a latte and a pastry, I had this moment of *You're in Prague. You're going to Vienna tomorrow. You sold your house. You retired from your job. It doesn't get any better than this.* It had always been hard for me to relax, and this was the first trip where I really felt, truly, that I could relax. It was this quiet moment with myself, the type of moment that had been so few and far between in my life.

The trip was a Girls' Guide to the World tour. What's wonderful about these women-only tours is that most people who travel are solo. It's not easy to make friends at 66, but you're there to meet other people. And you're there to talk to the captain on the boat, or you're there to talk to the chef. It makes me just appreciate life so much more.

Mendoza, *right,* with sister Josie

AN ANCESTRAL JOURNEY

10 Days in Spain

Rose Mendoza, 66, Georgetown, Texas
Retired: 2023, corporate marketer

MY FAMILY is from Guadalajara, Mexico. I have always identified as Mexican American. However, I took a DNA test and was stunned to discover I am 70 percent Spanish. To be slapped with the knowledge that my DNA comes from a different continent was shocking. So with retirement on the horizon, I decided that was the perfect time to visit my motherland with my sister.

Granada was the first town where I saw ladies who looked like my mother. We went to see a flamenco show. A lady came out playing castanets and dancing. She looked identical to our mother. My sister and I were blown away.

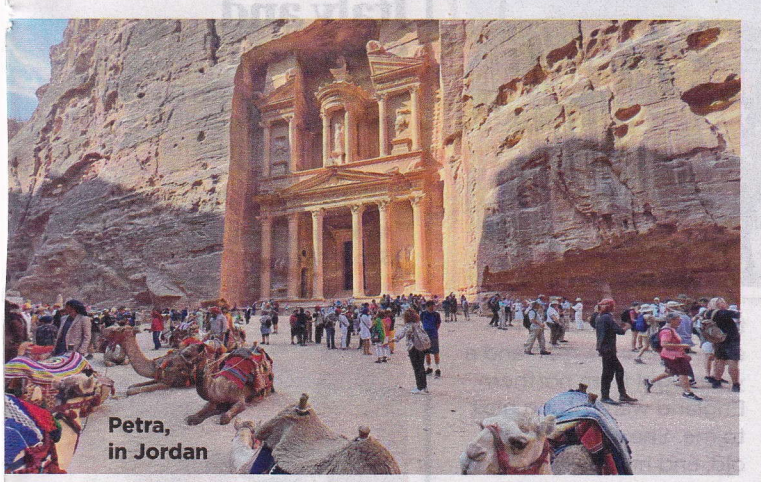
But when I got to Seville, I saw so many women with the same body type, hair, eye and skin color as mine. I felt a huge sense of pride seeing all these beautiful women who were my tribe.

The saying *la cultura cura* basically means: Being in touch with your heritage and culture heals the soul. That was my mindset when I went on this trip, to cure my soul with my culture. And the trip did that for me.

AROUND THE WORLD

12 Countries in 24 Days

Jamie Conway, 74, Park City, Utah
Retired: 2020, Hollywood TV director



Petra, in Jordan

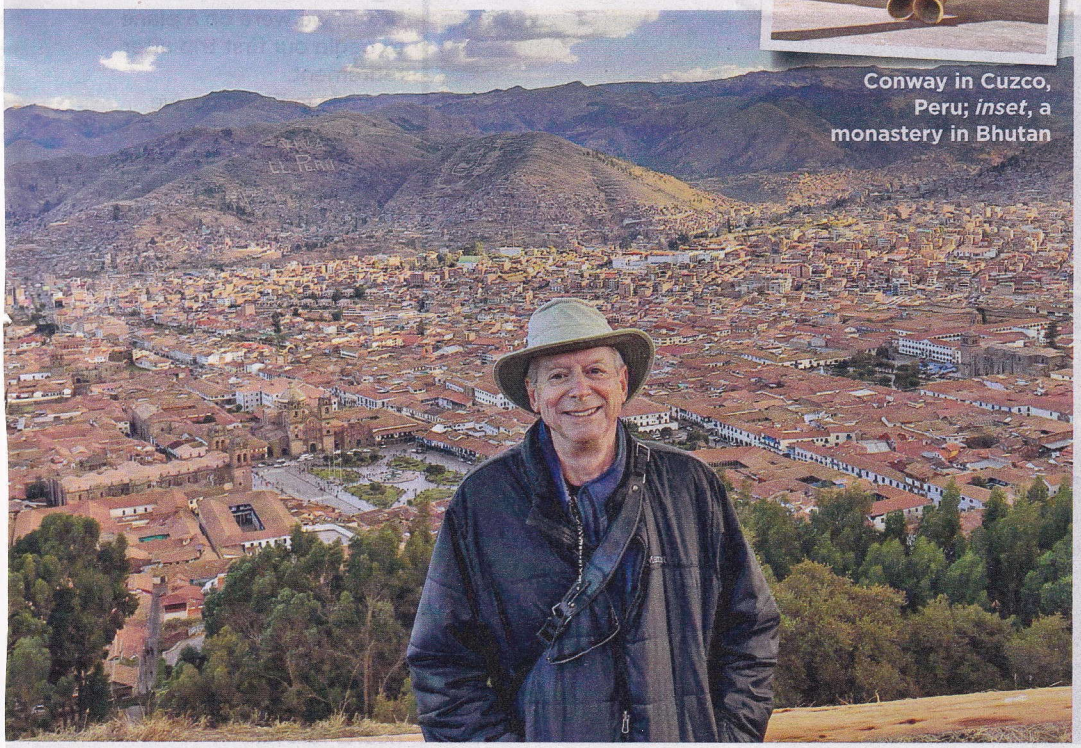
I RETIRED WHEN the pandemic started. My wife, Becky, and I had our hearts set on a postretirement trip around the world. But you couldn't travel then. In 2022, Becky got sick and passed away. The whole thing was very sudden and shocking.

Shortly after, I got a brochure about an around-the-world trip—24 days, to 12 countries, on a private jet. It seemed to be the perfect thing to fill my heart at that moment. They had one spot available, so I took it.

We flew from Washington, D.C., to Machu Picchu, to Easter Island and then to Fiji, and then the Great Barrier Reef. From there we went to India and saw the Taj Mahal. Next was Angkor Wat, Kathmandu in Nepal, Bhutan, and the Serengeti for two days of safaris. From there we flew to Jordan for Petra, then to Marrakech, Morocco.

Being in the film and TV business, I spent a lot of time on location scouts during my career. In a way, this was like that. As I was traveling, I was on a location scout to know where I wanted to revisit.

Becky and I had always traveled a lot together, and I felt like I had her with me the whole time. The first meal on the plane included a caviar appetizer, something Becky had loved. I took a photo of the plate and texted it to my daughters. And those gentle reminders continued throughout the trip with different foods and also museums I know she would have loved. Though I was alone, it was a way to keep her with me.



Conway in Cuzco, Peru; *inset*, a monastery in Bhutan

Tips for Taking a RETIREMENTMOON

Forget what other people think. "Seriously, this trip is for you, not your kids, your neighbor or whoever said, 'Oh, but wouldn't you rather go somewhere warm and easy?'" says Georgia Fowkes, an adviser with Altezza Travel. "If you've always dreamed of visiting the post-Soviet republics or chasing snow leopards, go do that."

Extend your stay. "Retirement means there's no rush. Spend more time in one place so you can really immerse yourself in the local culture and savor each day," says Leigh Barnes, president of the Americas at Intrepid Travel.

Travel during "shoulder" season. "Take advantage of the flexibility that comes with retirement," Barnes says. "The time just before or after peak season means fewer crowds, lower prices and still great weather."

Don't limit your adventure. "We recently had a 77-year-old experience Everest Base Camp with us. Another one of our customers is 66 and started traveling later in life and now has more than 70 countries under her belt. There's always room to push boundaries," Barnes says.

Choose tour companies wisely. "Look for people who have actual experience supporting older travelers," Fowkes says. "That's what makes the difference between a hard trip and a deeply joyful one." —*A.A.*

MUSIC AND MERRIMENT

Three Weeks in London

Jennifer Rumage, 56, Louisville, Kentucky
Retired: 2024, teacher

I WAS READY to celebrate my retirement by going to England. My original plan was to book a one-week vacation to London to see Pearl Jam last summer, but then I ended up planning a longer trip because a friend of a friend offered me a free room in Slough, 24 miles outside London.

Once there, imagine my disappointment when the Pearl Jam show was canceled due to singer Eddie Vedder falling ill. However, I still got to see another musical act: AC/DC.

It was at Wembley Stadium. Iconic. There are posters on the wall of Freddie Mercury from Live Aid. Wembley Stadium has been rebuilt since, but it's still a huge place. It's probably the biggest stadium I've ever been in. A man and a young girl from northern England were sitting next to me. She was 20 years old, and he was, like, my age. It was her dad. She had never seen AC/DC. They were loving it.

Along with the concert, I did other things, such as watching Wimbledon and going to Royal Ascot, where I saw King Charles and Queen Camilla get out of their carriage. I cherish the fact that I got to see everything that I ever wanted to see in London. Except for Pearl Jam.

London's Tower Bridge

UNEXPECTED MOMENTS

Two Months in France, Italy and Spain

Ron Celona, 67, San Diego
Retired: 2022, founding artistic theater director

Celona, *left*, with husband Scott Sherman

I RETIRED, and my husband, Scott Sherman, and I moved the next day from our home of 26 years in Palm Springs to San Diego. Eight days later, with a living room full of unpacked boxes, we were on a plane to begin our first trip after retirement.

While in Florence, we had two unexpected adventures. We learned of a friend of a friend who was getting married in Bologna. The bride extended an invitation, and it was a not-to-be-believed experience, held atop a hillside on the back lawn of a villa built in the 1800s. The bride and groom were in their 80s, which proves it's never too late to fall in love.

Our second unexpected adventure was the day after, when we took a train to Viareggio. Our close friend of 40 years invited us to a celebration brunch for her mother's 92nd birthday. It was filled with emotions, and the joy will stay in our hearts forever.

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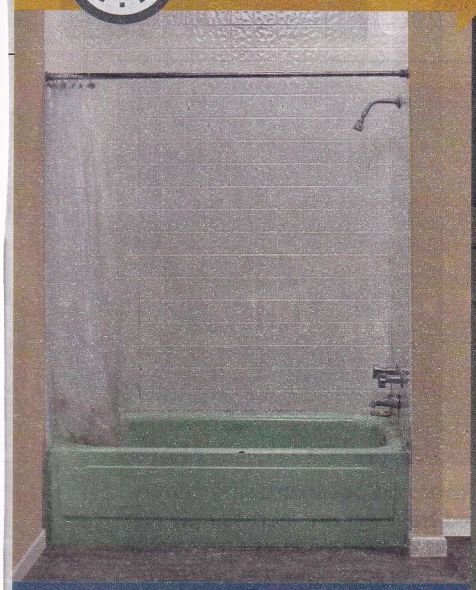

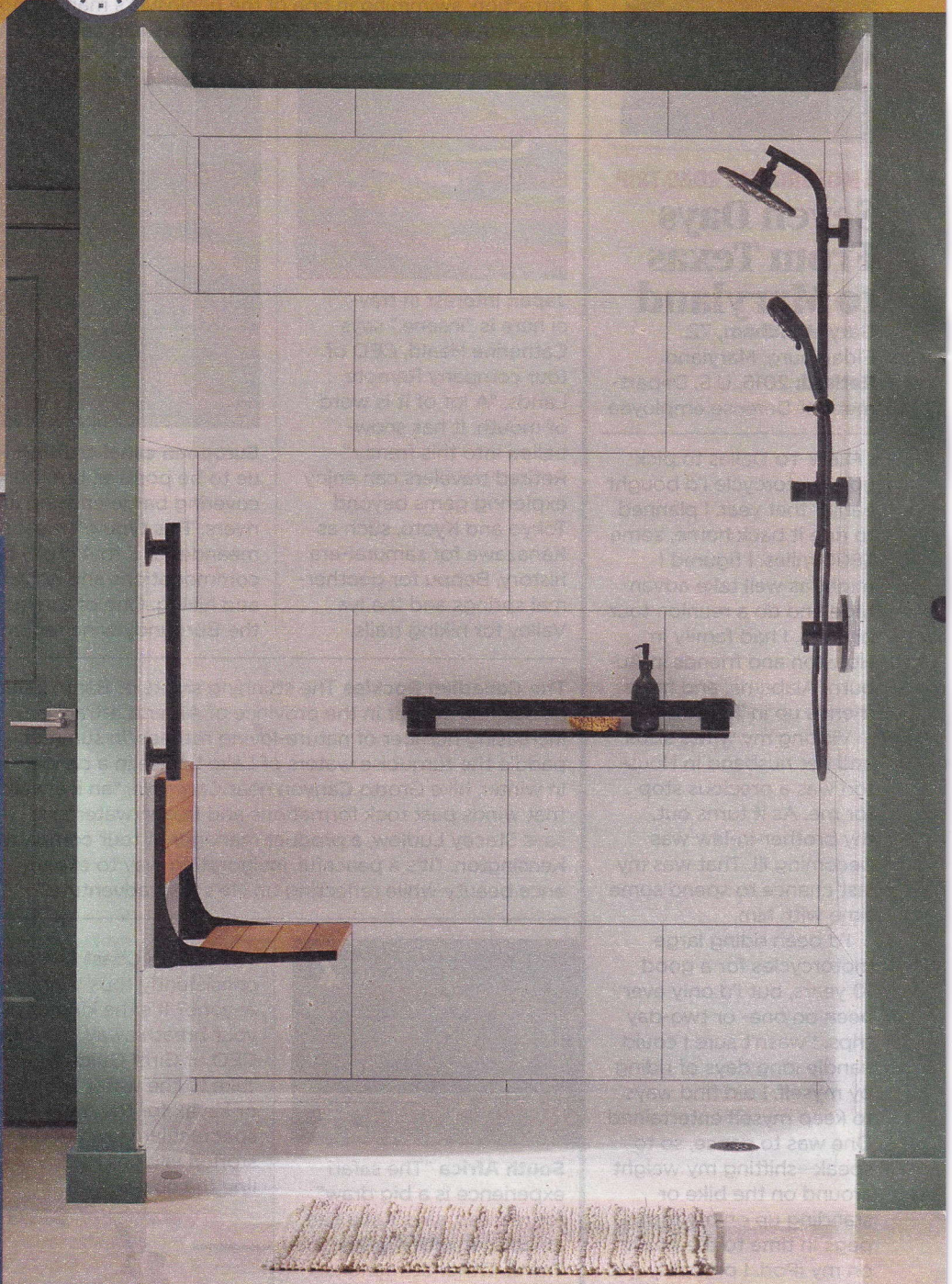

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Windham in Texas

A MOTORCYCLE ROAD TRIP

Seven Days From Texas to Maryland

Gary Windham, 72, Eldersburg, Maryland
Retired: 2016, U.S. Department of Defense employee

I FLEW TO Dallas to pick up a motorcycle I'd bought earlier that year. I planned to ride it back home, some 1,800 miles. I figured I might as well take advantage and do a reunion tour of sorts. I had family in Houston and friends in Auburn, Alabama, and more friends up in Tennessee.

Visiting my wife's sister and her husband in Houston was a precious stop for me. As it turns out, my brother-in-law was becoming ill. That was my last chance to spend some time with him.

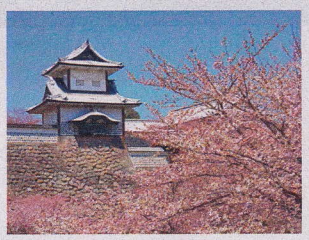
I'd been riding large motorcycles for a good 10 years, but I'd only ever been on one- or two-day trips. I wasn't sure I could handle long days of riding by myself. I did find ways to keep myself entertained. One was to dance, so to speak—shifting my weight around on the bike or standing up on my foot pegs in time to the music on my iPod. I probably got some odd looks.

I'd say the best thing about my trip was having to depend on myself, being alone for days at a time. ■

TOP RETIREMENT DESTINATIONS

Where travel agents say older people are heading

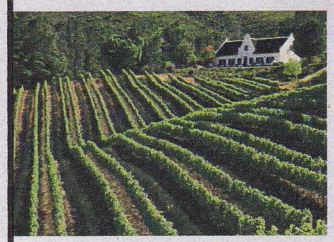
The Riviera Maya, Mexico Balmy weather and a relaxed vibe put the Yucatán peninsula's eastern coast at the top of many retirees' wish lists. Nadia Sparkle, owner of Travel With Sparkle, says older visitors are drawn to the Mayan ruins at Tulum. Another attraction: swimming in one of the peninsula's many cenotes (freshwater- and saltwater-filled sinkholes and caves).



Japan Interest in travel here is "insane," says Catherine Heald, CEO of tour company Remote Lands. "A lot of it is word of mouth. It has snowballed into this frenzy." Retired travelers can enjoy exploring gems beyond Tokyo and Kyoto, such as Kanazawa for samurai-era history, Beppu for geothermal springs and the Iya Valley for hiking trails.

European canal cruising River and ocean cruising continue to be popular, but retired travelers are increasingly discovering barge cruising along Europe's canals and smaller rivers. This type of vacation embraces slow travel (vessels meander at 3 to 4 mph) but doesn't skimp on plush accommodations and active on-land experiences, like biking and hiking. One of the most sought-after itineraries covers the Burgundy wine region.

The Canadian Rockies The stunning sights of Banff, Lake Louise and Jasper in the province of Alberta attract an increasing number of nature-loving retirees. In summer, paddle the turquoise waters of Lake Louise in a canoe. In winter, hike Grotto Canyon near Canmore, "an ice walk that winds past rock formations and frozen waterfalls," says Stacey Ludlow, a product manager at tour company Kensington. "It's a peaceful, invigorating way to experience beauty while reflecting on life's next adventure."



South Africa "The safari experience is a big draw" for retirees, says Katie Lee, an adviser with Audley Travel. Other attractions include the vibrant urban centers Cape Town and Johannesburg and the vineyards of Franschhoek and Stellenbosch. —*A.A.*

The Amalfi Coast This seaside in southern Italy consistently tops wish lists. "Can you blame anyone? It's the kind of place that takes your breath away," says Doni Belau, CEO of Girls' Guide to the World. Take to the water in a boat or kayak for the most spectacular views of the storied villages that line the coast.

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LISA'S BIG BARGAIN SHOPPING ADVENTURE

BY LISA LEE FREEMAN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY VISBII

INFLATION FEARS sent me on a journey earlier this year. I took bargain hunting to the extreme, traveling hundreds of miles in search of new and surprising places where I could stretch my dollar to the max.

What I found amazed me.

I explored corners of the bargain-verse that I had never experienced and that most people I know have never heard of. As a seasoned consumer journalist, I thought I had seen and shopped it all. I hadn't!

My quest spanned six types of retailers, which I chose using three criteria: One, they needed to have physical locations in multiple states—and not just in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, where I shopped with my husband, Bill—so no one-offs or online-only operators. Two, they had to offer deals you won't find at your local discount chain or on Temu or TikTok. Three, they had to offer a variety of products and cater to a range of budgets.

At a time when many of us are looking for ways to save, I hope my travelogue inspires you to expand your own bargain-hunting horizons.

AARP Bulletin's shopping wiz reveals how she found deals in unexpected places ... and how you can too!

BIN STORES

My shopping adventure began in a dimly lit warehouse off a small residential street in Bethel, Connecticut. It's easy to miss; the only evidence of a giant store inside is a tiny sign on the door that says "Kathalow Warehouse Treasures." Inside, stacks of home furnishings, electronics, small appliances, bedding and other merchandise fill shelves and clutter floors, and mountains of clothing, shoes and linens rise from long tables.

Like other stores in this category, Kathalow buys liquidated stock by the pallet rack. The industry is fueled in part by online returns, which are sold as "open-box" merchandise. The owner, Neda Macol, told me she also gets overstock and past-season products from Target, Kohl's, Bloomingdale's, Macy's and other retailers. Some items were damaged, dusty or looking used, but I found a lot of great deals. A wood cabinet, for example, cost $79, 47 percent less than it did on Amazon; a gold wall sconce listed on Wayfair for $175 was only $39, a 78 percent discount. I also saw lots of clothing at flea-market prices, like children's items for $3 apiece.

Unlike big closeout chains like Ollie's, the vibe at smaller operators like Kathalow is chaotic, with varying levels of grunge. Many of these resellers are known as "bin stores" because they dump merchandise—clothes, electronics, bedding, beauty products and more—into giant, shallow bins. Every item in the bin has the same price, which may drop over time. At Mystery Bins in West Nyack, New York, for example, you'll pay $15 per item on Saturdays, when new shipments arrive; prices drop daily until the following Friday, when the leftovers go for a buck. The store also sells individually priced large and small appliances.

I also took a road trip to Retail 101, a stadium-size warehouse in Shelton, Connecticut, that specializes in fashion and furniture. On a Thursday afternoon, the parking lot was packed, and customers were using enormous wheeled bins as shopping carts. I bought a $13 fanny pack that was $56 on the brand's website. I also fell in love with a 10-foot-long teak dining room table in perfect condition, which I saw online for $2,900 but at this store cost only $600.

▶**How to find them:** Search online for closeout and bin stores or local liquidators. Try sites like thebinfinder.com and binstorefinder.com.

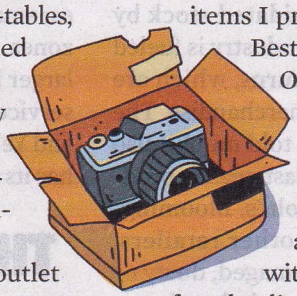
▶**Special tips:** Check items carefully and ask permission to open boxes; smaller operators are no-returns zones. Don't expect warranties or, for larger items, delivery and installation services. And read reviews on Google and Yelp for insider insight; each store has its quirks.

THRIFT OUTLETS

There are thrift shops, and then there are thrift *outlets*. Before this journey, I was well acquainted with Goodwill and similar shops, but I was totally unprepared for the outlet version. In Hamden, Connecticut, it was a quiet Monday afternoon in February, but inside the town's Goodwill thrift outlet, it was pandemonium. Hordes of shoppers were ransacking boat-size bins of clothing, books, shoes, home goods and electronics, and tossing their finds into overloaded shopping carts.

This is where Goodwill dumps its overflow. Bins of donations are rolled out continually. Almost everything is priced by the pound—glassware and dishes are 69 cents a pound, and

other stuff is $1.79 per pound. The charity says that a shirt costing $7 at a Goodwill thrift store may cost as little as 50 cents at a Goodwill outlet. My favorite part was the furniture. Although most of it needed some work—a deep clean, small repair or paint job—tables, cabinets and couches were priced at just $5 or $10.



Overall, it's a down-and-dirty free-for-all. In fact, Goodwill's own website warns that shoppers "are known to be competitive and aggressive."

For a more relaxed charity-outlet experience, try Habitat for Humanity's ReStores. The one I visited in Newburgh, New York, was neat and well organized. ReStores are selective; you'll find a lot of nice furniture, wall art, lamps, decor and more. A store manager told me that you can decorate a whole house for under $500. Although donations are mostly from individuals, she said, HomeGoods stores also contribute to the mix.

▶**How to find them:** Both chains have more than 100 locations. Visit habitat.org/restores and goodwilloutlets.com to find one near you.

▶**Special tips:** Check your local ReStore's Facebook page, which may show what's in stock. Goodwill recommends wearing gloves when you shop, in part to protect yourself from injury. They aren't kidding!

CLEARANCE OUTLETS

I'm a huge fan of outlet malls, but over the years I've seen fewer markdowns on regular merchandise and more items made specifically for the outlets. But old-fashioned outlets are still out there. I saw this contrast when I visited a strip mall in Marlton, New Jersey. At a Raymour & Flanigan outlet, a salesperson told me prices are lower than at the brand's regular retail stores because the furniture is made with lower-quality materials—perhaps a good choice if you're on a tight budget. Meanwhile, across the parking lot, a Best Buy Outlet was offering deep discounts on regular retail stock sold as open-box merchandise, such as items that were returned or dinged during transport. Outlets also sell overstock and floor samples. On items I price-checked at that Best Buy and at a Lowe's Outlet in Meriden, Connecticut, savings ranged from 15 percent for a dryer to 62 percent for a vanity, compared with the lowest prices I found online. Many things were half off or more, including TVs, fridges, a lawn mower and a barbecue.

▶**How to find them:** Search online for the names of retailers and the words "open box outlet" or "clearance center." You can also try thatoutletgirl.com, where I got the inside scoop on Nordstrom's Last Chance outlets. There are just two stand-alone versions of those stores in the United States, and neither one is near me. Boo-hoo!

▶**Special tips:** Even if a store says its open-box items have been tested, check for damage and missing parts. Also ask about delivery and installation services, return policies and warranties, which may differ from those at the regular retail stores.

SAMPLE SALES

If you crave designer clothing, accessories and home goods, there are no better bargain-hunting grounds than sample sales: pop-ups where high-end brands unload excess merchandise. On one cold, blustery Tuesday in April, I spent the day running around New York City to see what they're all about.

I started at Lacoste on the first day of its sale. Outside, it was like the entrance to a nightclub, with a mob in front and a bouncer at the door. Inside, a guard made me surrender my purse and jacket—a common practice at sample sales. Handing over my bag made me twitchy (although I removed

LISA'S 10 Bargain-Hunting Do's and Don'ts

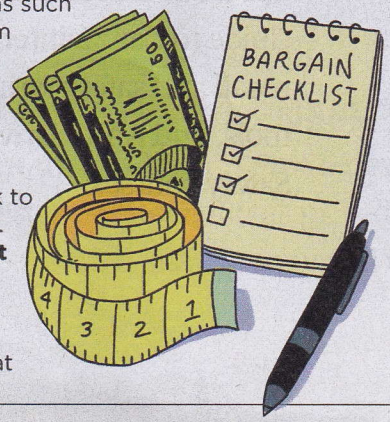
✗ **DON'T come unprepared.** Learn the system! At bin stores, for example, prices may depend on the day of the week. Nontraditional retailers may have unusual store hours and might not accept all forms of payment. Bring cash, which can grease the wheels when you're negotiating.

✓ **DO think about size.** Bring a tape measure and a list or diagram with dimensions of your rooms if you're looking for items such as a dining room table, area rugs and other home goods. Also, measure your vehicle's doors and trunk to see what will fit.

✗ **DON'T expect success.** Merchandise can change daily or even hourly at nontraditional retail stores, so shopping can be hit-or-miss. The more often you shop, the better your odds of bagging a bargain.

✓ **DO compare prices.** Just because there are lots of great deals doesn't mean everything is a bargain. Visual search tools on Google, Amazon and eBay make it super easy to find a match or near-match. To use the tools, open the mobile app, tap the camera symbol in the search bar, and take a picture of the item.

✗ **DON'T get stuck.** Check items carefully, since they may be sold as is and be final sale. Look for return policies online and near checkout areas.



✓ **DO be a follower.** Many nontraditional retailers rely on social media to publicize new inventory.

✗ **DON'T expect neat and tidy.** Be prepared to sift through disorderly racks and piles. If convenience is your top priority, you're reading the wrong article!

✓ **DO factor in delivery costs.** If you're shopping for larger items, research the costs of renting a van or truck if you don't own one. Some stores offer delivery for a fee or can recommend a local service. Also, bring boxes, bags and packing materials, like old towels, blankets and bubble wrap.

✗ **DON'T be shy.** Negotiate! Remember, they want to get rid of the stuff!

✓ **DO check out deals online.** Woot, Amazon Outlet and Amazon Resale are great sources of overstock and open-box deals. The craziest bargains I found online were at govdeals.com, which auctions off government surplus, including clothing, jewelry, furniture and cars.

my wallet), but I quickly got over that once I dived into racks full of bargains.

Overall, the discounts that day were substantial. A jacket that went for $240 on Lacoste's website was available in a different color for only $85. At a Retrofête sample sale, I paid $49 for a black-and-silver satin blouse—59 percent less than the lowest price I could find online. A pair of designer sandals I spotted at another sample sale cost $100; I found them online for $850.

Although an item may cost a fraction of what you'd pay at retail, it can still have a jaw-dropping price. Sixty percent off might sound great, but not when it came to the earrings I fell in love with at a John Hardy sample sale: The original price was $11,000!

▶ **How to find them:** They're usually held in big cities; check listings at chicmi.com, 260samplesale.com and timeout.com. Or search Instagram using the hashtag #samplesale.

▶ **Special tips:** Go online beforehand for details, such as whether a sale is invitation-only. Purchases are usually final, so no buying without trying! Because there may be no dressing rooms, wear clothes that allow you to try things on without disrobing. I recommend a T-shirt and yoga pants, shorts or a wide skirt.

HOME AND ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE

Walking through the parking lot of Zaborski Emporium's multistory warehouse in Kingston, New York, was like entering a long-lost world. A field of rusty radiators surrounded the entrance like guards at an ancient temple. The inside was loaded with floor-to-ceiling stacks of old windows, doors, lamps, toilets, tubs, home decor, furniture—everything *and* the kitchen sinks.

Salvage operations like Zaborski sell just about anything that can be removed from buildings and homes prior to demolition, making them great places to shop if you're remodeling or you just love antiques. They look like a cross between a museum and a flea market.

Some salvage operations specialize in pricey antiques. For example, at Hudson Valley House Parts in Newburgh, New York, doors and lighting fixtures can run many thousands of dollars. On the other end of the spectrum is the Remix Market salvage store chain run by the junk-removal company Junkluggers. At one of those stores, I spotted a nice sofa for $200, lamps for (CONTINUED ON PAGE 72)

AARP®

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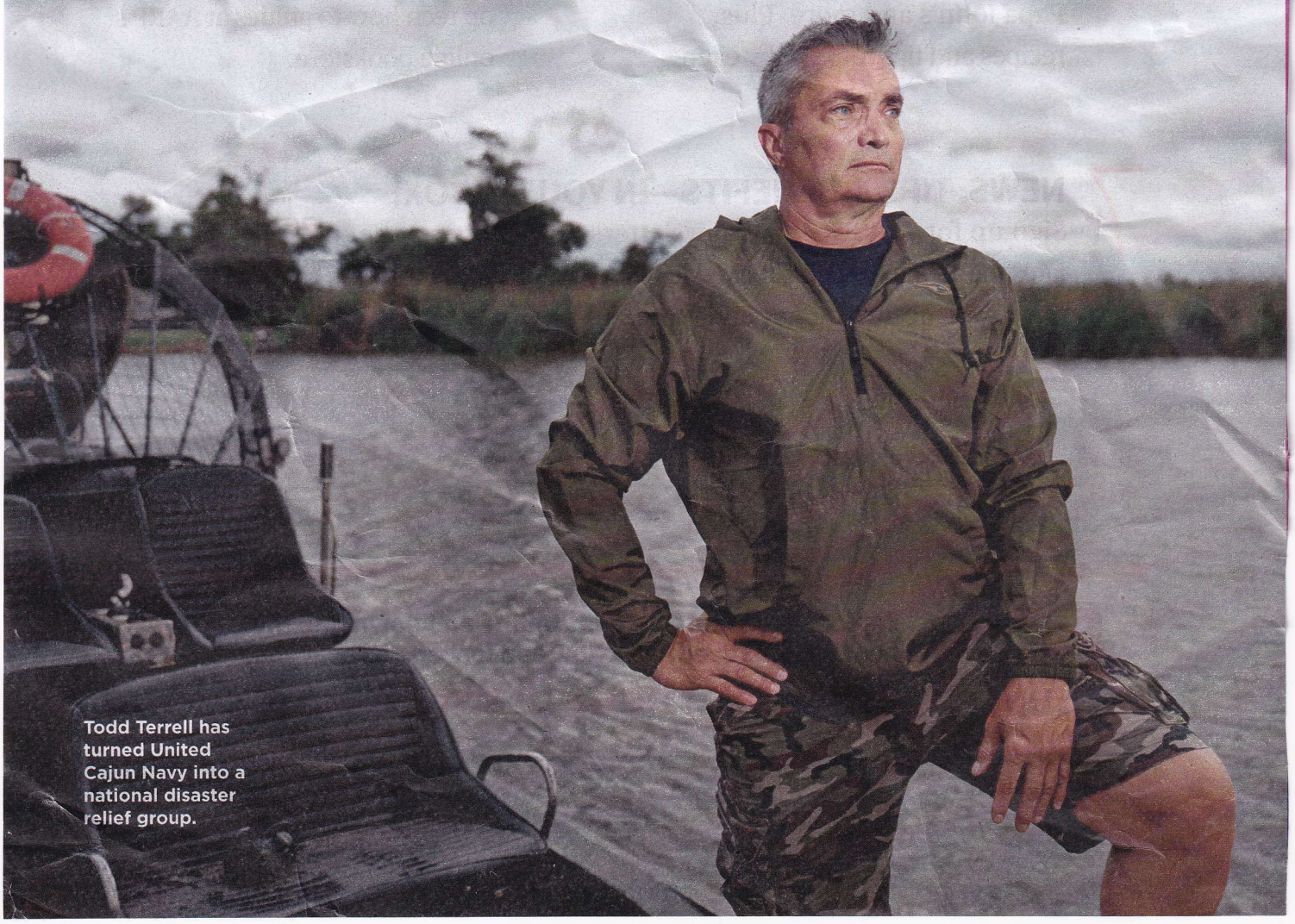
20TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT

Lessons From Katrina

Twenty years after he visited the Gulf Coast in the wake of the devastating hurricane, our reporter returns to talk to six residents who have made it their mission to rejuvenate their communities

By David Hochman PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAYMON GARDNER

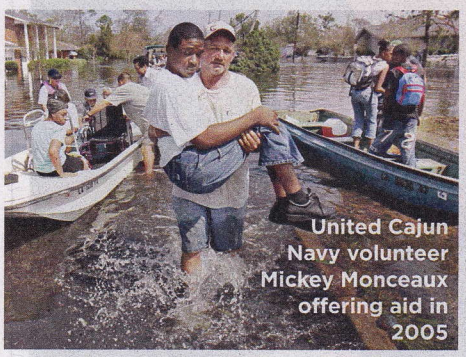


Todd Terrell has turned United Cajun Navy into a national disaster relief group.

IN NEW ORLEANS, longtime residents once sat on their porches and waved the weather forecasters along, certain the Mississippi would mind its manners. They'd seen so many "storms of the century" come and go, there was a kind of local pride in "ridin' things out." If you'd weathered Betsy in 1965 and other big blows, the generational wisdom boiled down to a shrugged "We've been through worse."

Then came Katrina. When the levees failed on August 29, 2005, nearly 80 percent of New Orleans was submerged, making it one of the costliest residential disasters in U.S. history. In Louisiana alone, Katrina claimed at least 986 lives—although some estimates place the toll closer to 1,300. More than 200,000 jobs disappeared almost overnight. In many ways, older adults suffered the most. Though those 75 and older made up just 6 percent of the city's population, they accounted for more than half of all lives lost.

I arrived in New Orleans a couple of months after the storm to cover the early stages of recovery. The city was in shambles. Street signs hung sideways. Homes were spray-painted with rescue codes. I'll never forget the rancid smell, or the heavy air of grief. But even then, resilience was rising; I felt a pulse, faint but steady. Now, 20 years on, I've returned—not only to remember but to ask: What did people do with the years since Katrina? What does it take to start over? How do you rebuild when your old life isn't coming back?



United Cajun Navy volunteer Mickey Monceaux offering aid in 2005

AP Photo/Eric Gay

You still see vacant lots and boarded-up homes. Roads and drainage systems are under strain. Poverty and crime remain top concerns. But in ways both visible and quietly profound, Katrina pushed people with experience—even the seen-it-all types—into new territory. In the wreckage, many found space for something else to take root.

When Rescue Comes by Boat and Bravery

"We'd shine a flashlight through the window, and you'd just see these eyes staring back at you in terror."

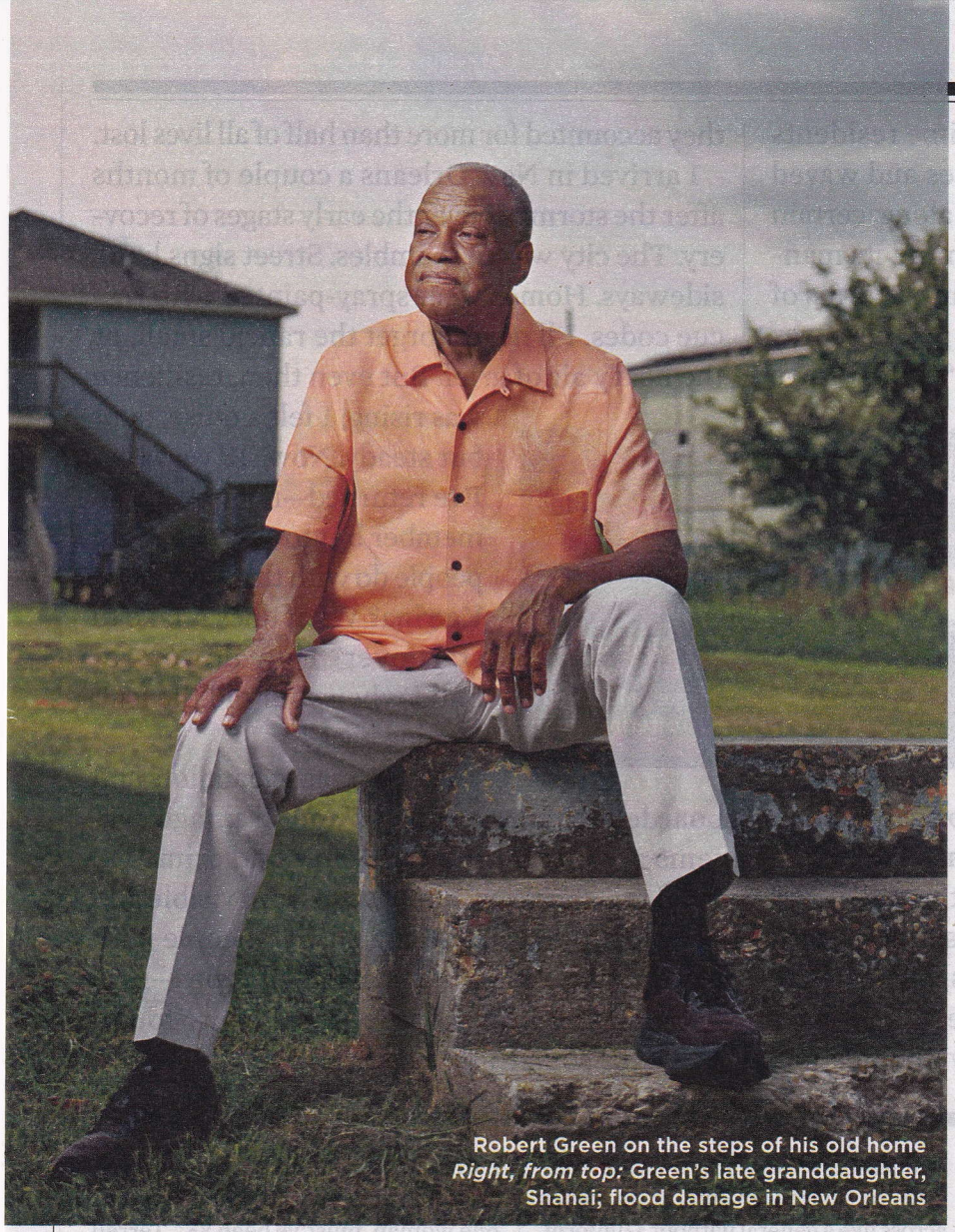
Todd Terrell, 58, founder of the United Cajun Navy

TODD TERRELL talks like a man with three other places to be. Over the course of our conversation, his phone dinged 11 times with updates from his lieutenants: a fundraising fish fry in Baton Rouge, tornado strikes in Tennessee, swift-water training exercises in North Carolina. If he comes across like a general without a uniform, that's about right. Terrell's the head of the United Cajun Navy.

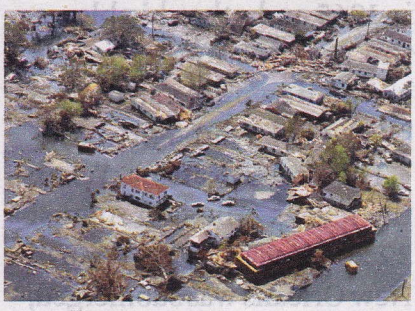
Twenty years ago, Terrell was working for his family's seafood business in New Orleans when Katrina knocked out a couple of their processing plants around Lake Pontchartrain. "It was terrible," he says. "No roads, water everywhere, and nobody was coming in to help. I grabbed a boat, and I think I slept two or three hours over the next five nights." Terrell and the ragtag crew of volunteers he assembled—veterans, shrimpers, bikers, Sunday school teachers—braved raging waters, snakes and gunfire to pluck people off branches, ferry residents from nursing homes and follow whatever path a scratchy CB call or scribbled map might reveal. "There was this one woman, must've been 85," Terrell recalls. "She was sitting on her porch with water up to her knees, holding a Bible in one hand and her medication in the other. Said she'd been praying for a boat."

What began as an act of desperation became a calling. Today, United Cajun Navy is a national disaster relief group that rushes in when others pack up. Its focus is on those overlooked—most often older people. They knock on trailer doors, check on isolated grandparents after blackouts and quietly stock underserved nursing homes with hygiene kits, socks and warm blankets.

"You'd be surprised how many older folks just need someone to knock and say, 'Hey, you OK?' " Terrell says.



Robert Green on the steps of his old home
Right, from top: Green's late granddaughter, Shanai; flood damage in New Orleans



Remembering the Roof Riders

"You can't let what happened hold on to you, because there's always hope."

Robert Lynn Green Sr., 70, founding member, Roof Riders

"WE DIDN'T expect 25 feet of water, and we definitely didn't think our house would start floating away," Robert Lynn Green Sr. says. But there they were—Green and his three grandkids (ages 2, 3 and 4), his brother, his cousin who had an intellectual disability, and his ailing 73-year-old mother—bobbing through the Lower 9th Ward at 4 a.m. atop their World War II–era house, "praying to God this hell ride would stop." It didn't. Tragically, the 3-year-old fell off the roof to her death. Green's mother also perished.

"I cried so hard the first time I told the story, and the second and 50th time too," Green tells me. "But now I've told it a thousand times, and the tears don't come. Now I celebrate life."

That resilience and resolve made Green, a semiretired tax accountant, something of a local hero when he was among the first to move back to what he calls "the wilderness" of wreckage and emptiness that defined the Lower 9th. When "disaster tours" started rolling through the neighborhood mere weeks after the storm, Green didn't seethe like many of his neighbors. He stopped and talked to people. "I wanted everyone to know what happened," he says.

And he rebuilt. After Katrina, Green lived in a FEMA trailer beside the ruins of his home, featuring two memorial markers and a sign that read "Roots Run Deep Here." Eventually, he moved into a new house built on the same lot—one of the first to go up after the storm.

On August 29 each year for the past 20 years, Green and his family and neighbors, all in shirts that read "The Original Roof Riders," mark Katrina's anniversary with a walk from the spot on Tennessee Street where his family house came off its foundation to the large oak tree a few blocks away where it came to rest. There, they read aloud the names of those who died in the storm. A booming bass drum and wailing trumpets make sure grief doesn't get the last word.

"When you lose something, it doesn't have to define you," Green says. "You're alive? You're winning."

Serving Humanity One Hot Meal at a Time

"Disaster food should taste like love."

Gary LeBlanc, 69, and Ann LeBlanc, 62, owners, Mercy Chefs

Opposite, from top: David Grunfeld/Tribune News Service via Getty Images; STR New/Reuters/Redux. This page: Courtesy Mercy Chefs

A HOTEL group manager working in Virginia, Gary LeBlanc watched helplessly as flooding swallowed the streets of his beloved hometown. On the TV screen, he recognized familiar intersections and even a few faces on the highway overpasses. He knew he had to get in the car and start driving: LeBlanc's adult daughter was safe, but her house in New Orleans East was under 7 feet of water. His grandmother, who'd evacuated to stay with a relative, had fallen in the dark and broken her hip. She would never recover.

"I certainly couldn't fix everything," LeBlanc tells me. "But I could cook. So that's what I did."

When he finally made it to New Orleans 48 hours later, what he saw shocked him. At makeshift relief centers, people were being handed cold green beans straight from the can. "It was the worst week of their lives," he says. "And we were feeding them like they didn't matter. Food kept them alive, OK—but it didn't help them feel human."

A couple of weeks later, back in Virginia, he stayed up late filling legal pads with ideas: hot meals, made by real chefs, served with compassion. When no relief organization would take him seriously about launching an operation of that sort, he started his own. Nine months after Katrina, Mercy Chefs was born.

A grateful Hurricane Helene (2024) customer

I spoke with Gary and his wife, Ann, who now run the nonprofit together. You'd never guess, from the way they downplay it, that they've fed more people than some countries hold. Mercy Chefs has served more than 29 million meals—grilled chicken, jambalaya, made-from-scratch casseroles—to survivors, first responders and displaced families in nearly every major U.S. disaster since Katrina. But they tell me the work with older adults matters the most.

"They're often stranded, isolated and forgotten," Gary says. "And they can't always come to you. You have to go to them."

During disasters, the team seeks out senior housing where elevators are stalled, power is out and residents might be stranded. They bring meals—but also routine, recognition and calm. "As you age, the little things really matter," Ann says. "We try to be the opposite of abandonment."

Their work doesn't end after that initial push. Mercy Chefs helps build community kitchens, restock pantries and create grocery programs for families long after the headlines fade. "Your doctor might be gone. Your pharmacy might be underwater," Gary tells me. "But we stay."

On August 29, 2021—16 years to the day after Katrina made landfall—Hurricane Ida struck Louisiana. Mercy Chefs rolled in with two mobile kitchens and one idea: "We wanted to do something different," Ann says. They grilled steaks.

"Cars were lining up down the block," Gary recalls. "When folks saw the steak in the takeout box, they'd stop the car, put it in park and come back just to hug somebody. They couldn't believe it—real food. Disaster food that tasted like love." →

Ann and Gary LeBlanc, in one of Mercy Chefs' mobile kitchens

"Everything that's thrown away, you find another way."

Willie Birch, 82, renowned artist

AFTER Katrina, some people dug storm drains or put their houses on stilts. Willie Birch couldn't stop uncovering beauty. When mounds of crawfish from surge waters showed up in his New Orleans backyard, he cast bronze sculptures of their gnarled dwellings as a testament to survival and rebirth. Galleries snapped them up. The same with his large-scale black-and-white silkscreens of storm-flattened buildings and downed power lines that somehow captured the visual poetry of Katrina's chaos.

Last spring, I met him in his garden of second chances on a tucked-away stretch of the Upper 7th Ward. Birch, whose work hangs in New York City's MoMA and the Met, is a New Orleans native but could have retired anywhere. After a decade in New York, he returned in the '90s to New Orleans, bought a broken patch of Old Prieur Street—four crumbling shotgun houses connected by two vacant lots—and made it a living monument to the power of art, memory and community. He's guided by a lesson from the late Big Chief Allison "Tootie" Montana, a Mardi Gras chief of chiefs: Make your art for the people so when they see it, they feel good about themselves.

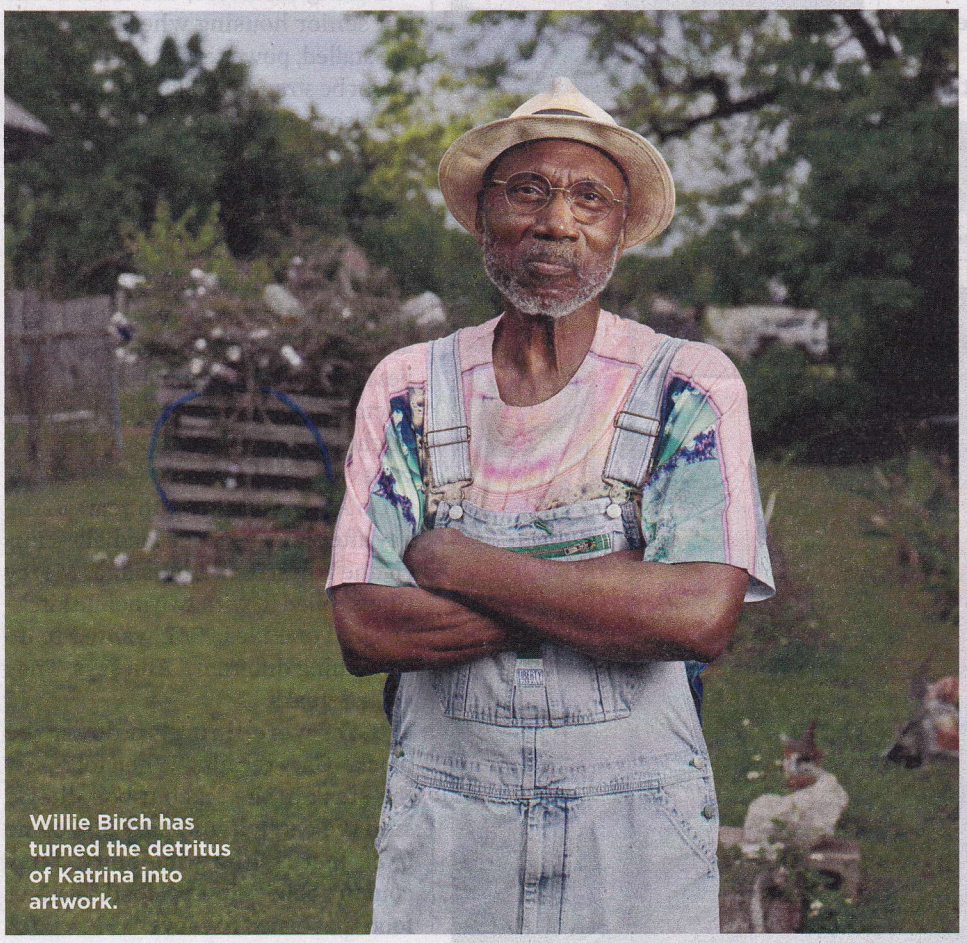
Among the wild mustard greens and morning glories, he installed colorful rock sculptures and metal mobiles by fellow artists and built a fence featuring the names of longtime residents of a neighborhood too often left in the margins.

"Somebody came and put a wreath on their mother's name after she died, so I knew something was working," he says. Birch's charcoal drawings of cracked sidewalks and sunken porches make you think twice about what some call urban blight. The money he earns—Birch's work frequently sells in the tens of thousands—goes almost entirely into a community trust he's building that ensures his neighborhood haven will serve future generations as an art space and meeting hub.

"People said, 'Are you outta your mind investing here?'" he says as two kids casually ride by on bikes. Birch waves to them as they slow down to gawk at his sunflowers. "Why would I turn my back on this?"

In the garden, there's a traditional bottle tree, common among African American communities of the rural South and made from discarded bottles, and broken pecan branches rising from a crate that reads "Imagine." There's a ceramic ear in the dirt that, as you look, could also be a swirling storm front. In big gold letters along a wall of rusty chain link is a line Birch's grandmother often said: "Flowers are for the living."

All of this is deeply moving. Maybe it's the idea that ruin can yield seed—and surprise. That you can take crushed soup cans, cowrie shells, broken bricks and bald tires and create meaning. In Birch's yard, the raw materials of post-storm New Orleans aren't cleaned up or carted off. They're the whole point. "Everything that's thrown away, you find another way," is how Birch puts it. Even the weeds, he says, are "talking to you—if you know how to look."



Willie Birch has turned the detritus of Katrina into artwork.

Pascagoula police officer Darren B. Versiga puts names to Katrina's missing.

Restoring What Katrina Tried to Erase

"The unknown dead deserve their names back."

Darren B. Versiga, 61, missing persons sleuth

A WEEK AFTER Katrina ripped through Biloxi, Mississippi, the body of a woman was found in the rubble between two homes a few miles from town. Investigators knew the remains belonged to a Black woman, estimated to be between ages 50 and 59, but they could not identify her, so they buried her in nearby Pascagoula under the inscription "Jane (Love), Katrina victim." The case went cold, like so many others from the storm. While as many as 11,000 people were initially reported missing in the days after Katrina, the vast majority have been accounted for. But estimates today suggest that several hundred were never found.

Even one unsolved case is too many for Pascagoula police lieutenant Darren B. Versiga, who followed the Jane (Love) tragedy from the beginning.

"With this death in particular, I thought, *This could have been my child, or my wife or me*," says Versiga, who fled his own flooded home during Katrina and rode out the immediate aftermath for five hours with his wife and their three children clinging to an inoperable Jet Ski.

Around 2010, Versiga began digging deeper into unidentified missing persons cases in his spare time, pro bono. "It haunted me that so many of these lives ended without a proper story or an answer."

Working alongside DNA experts and others, Versiga helped resolve nine cold cases, unrelated to the storm, with positive IDs. About a year ago, he returned to the unidentified Katrina victim buried in the Machpelah Cemetery. With an infusion of funding from Carla Davis, a philanthropist and genealogist at a Texas forensic genetic genealogy company committed to resolving a backlog of unsolved deaths in Mississippi, Versiga directed experts to exhume the remains. It wasn't long before the lab identified Jane (Love) as Tonette Waltman Jackson.

That's when the full human story came into focus. Jackson's husband had searched and grieved for years. In an interview just after the storm, he described how the floodwaters split their home in two and swept her from his arms. "She told me, 'You take care of the kids and the grandkids,'" he recalled. He kept that promise—until the end of his life in 2013. That same year, her name was quietly added to Biloxi's Katrina Memorial. Now, nearly two decades since her death, Jackson's family has her ashes—and some resolve.

"There's never been a more satisfying moment in my career," Versiga says. "The unknown dead deserve their names back." ■

David Hochman is a longtime contributing editor for AARP The Magazine. *His bylines appear in* The New York Times, Forbes, GQ, Food & Wine *and many other publications.*

From left: AARP; Willie J. Allen Jr./Orlando Sentinel/Tribune News Service via Getty Images

AARP & NEW ORLEANS

20 Years of Showing Up

AARP HAS been very active in post-Katrina work in New Orleans and has pushed hard on disaster preparedness for older adults. Some examples:

2006 Hollygrove Livable Communities Project AARP Louisiana partnered with neighborhood leaders to create an "elder-friendly" rebuilding plan in one of the city's hardest-hit areas.

2022 Disaster Resilience Toolkit (with FEMA) Free guide for local officials on protecting adults 50-plus before, during and after extreme weather.

2024–25 "Be Ready, Stay Safe" Workshops AARP Louisiana's traveling clinics teach older residents how to build go kits, safeguard meds and store vital documents.

Ongoing AARP Foundation Relief Grants Funding for legal aid, home repair and meal programs for low-income older adults after disasters like Hurricanes Ida and, most recently, Helene.

Check out **aarp.org/disasterhelp** for preparedness checklists and volunteer opportunities.

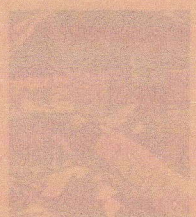
AARP Foundation®

For a future without senior poverty.

Our donors don't just give —they empower.

Thanks to donors like you, AARP Foundation is meeting its mission to reduce poverty for and with older adults. Last year, you empowered over 1 million older adults to transform their lives through good jobs, healthy food, medical care, tax savings, volunteer opportunities, and much more.

Thank you to our donors for cultivating meaningful change and a future where everyone can age with dignity and purpose.



See what you make possible at aarpfoundation.org/annualreport

The AARP
Book Excerpt
BONUS CONTENT!

'Tramps Like Us, Baby We Were Born to Run'

How the searing lyrics to Bruce Springsteen's giant 1975 hit came to be / ***By Peter Ames Carlin***

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LELAND FOSTER

Fifty years ago, after the commercial failure of his first two albums, Bruce Springsteen released his iconic album *Born to Run*. *Born*—bookended by "Thunder Road" and the epic "Jungleland"—leaped up the charts, and Springsteen was launched into superstardom.

At the center of the Boss's masterpiece was the gorgeously wrought summer anthem "Born to Run." Here's its somewhat fraught two-year creation story, adapted from my new book, *Tonight in Jungleland*.

ON A PAGE IN his notebook, the song was coming together. It was fall of 1973 and Bruce Springsteen was in Asbury Park, watching the street racers in their souped-up cars orbiting the Ocean Avenue/Kingsley Street circuit on a Saturday night.

The parade of muscular, lovingly detailed automobiles stirred something in him—the way the cars animated their owners' spirits. The candy shades of red, purple, and blue, the racing stripes and hand-painted eagles, the dazzling chrome and shimmering glass. And the power of their engines: the low rumble as they idled, the jet roar of takeoff. *Like animals pacing in a black, dark cage, senses on overload ... / They're gonna end this night in a senseless fight / And then watch the world explode.*

One car had words running down its flank, a chain of cursive letters canted forward as if pulled by the finish line off in the distance. A dare, a philosophy, an explanation. Did he actually see it on a passing racer? Or did it simply pop into his head? Bruce wrote it into his notebook, in case he forgot it. He'd never forget it.

Born to run.

BY THE END OF 1973, Bruce Springsteen was in a tough spot. His first album on Columbia Records, *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.*, had been released that January. Critics and a small cadre of fans had loved it, and his second album, *The Wild, the Innocent and the E Street Shuffle*, released that fall, won the same acclaim, but also the same weak sales. That hard fact, along with a shift in Columbia Records' upper management, meant that Bruce had fallen increasingly out of step with his record company. It was taking longer and longer for his manager, Mike Appel, to get his calls returned. Especially now that he was trying to figure out when they'd be getting the money they'd need to fund recording sessions for Bruce's next album.

When he finally got an answer in the early weeks of 1974, the news was frustrating, at best. Go make a single, they said. If it sounds like it could be on the radio, we'll pay for the rest of the album. Appel tried to protest: Bruce isn't a singles act, he argued. It's all about albums; that's been the plan all along. But that hadn't worked, the executives said. So this is your chance. Go make a single.

Bruce, then 24, was particularly close to Appel and trusted him so implicitly, he barely read the contracts his new manager gave him to sign. The two made an unlikely but surprisingly well-matched pair. Appel was a few years older, then 31, with shorter hair, neater clothes, and the restless energy of a man who was trying to get somewhere else. Bruce was just as ambitious but moved through the world more quietly. He talked less, tended to the edges of the room, and kept watch. When something caught his eye, he reached for his notebook and clicked open his pen. You never knew what he was seeing, what he was thinking, not until he stepped onto the stage, saw his musicians around him, and counted to four.

But Bruce knew he had in Appel an advocate, a protector, and a record producer. "His heart was in it, and everything else," Bruce told me. "That's part of what attracted me, because it was all or nothing." Now that the executives at Columbia had made it clear that his recording contract was on the line, Bruce wanted to make certain his new songs had the economy and drive to fit on the radio. He would need to hone his style to make his songs sleeker, faster, and more powerful. Like the singles Phil Spector made in the early 1960s. What did he need to do to get there?

Appel had thoughts. Spector songs had lyrics that were direct, first person, conversational, he told Bruce. They left plenty of space between for the melody to come through. Bruce's songs, like "Blinded by the Light," sounded like lyrical Gatling guns: words upon words upon words. "But you can't do that with a Phil Spector production," Appel said.

Bruce absorbed it, nodded, picked up his notebook. He had a new song that felt different from what they'd done before. He wasn't done with it yet, but the bones, and the essential feelings, were there. The chords for the song, and the melody of the verses, found their shape nearly immediately. In one early draft, titled "Wild Angels," the verses describe a litany of modern urban catastrophes. Murderous junkies turn shotguns on soldiers on leave from Fort Dix.

Them wild boys did it just for the noise.

Not even for the kicks. Roads crumble, drivers are crushed beneath their own cars. The game is so rigged, it's murderous.

This town'll rip the bones from your back. It's a death trap. →

You're dead unless you get out when you're young.

It feels unexpected, nothing like the songs on Bruce's first two albums. But as he was watching the world and absorbing the culture that reflected how it felt to be alive in that moment, it had the ring of truth. "I was naturally close to a sort of rock 'n' roll gothicness," says Bruce now. "That was just where I was coming from, from all the B movies I saw, and from growing up in Asbury Park with the hot rods, you know, spinning around the circuit on a nightly basis."

Bruce kept working, filling his notebook. Eventually the words began to lose their hysterical edge. The gloom and the sense of danger persisted. Still, by the start of the spring, Bruce's words identified something glimmering on the horizon. A potential end point for the one phrase that could be found in every draft: *Tramps like us, baby we were born to run.*

He showed Appel a draft of lyrics for "Born to Run." A week or so after that, he had another revision. Then another, and another. "He had five different versions," says Appel. "And finally I said to him, 'Don't ask me anymore which one I liked the best. I like all five versions. If you're gonna ask me again, I'm just gonna look at you and stare until you get the picture that you've gotta decide, not me.'"

BRUCE WAS trying to fulfill his record company's demand for a song that might appeal to more than his small cult of fans. But he also knew what he could do when he set his mind to it. "I'm not going to be defined by what other people are telling me, who I was or what I should be," he says. Who he wanted to be, what he hoped "Born to Run" would help him become, was this: a rock star.

He wasn't shy about this ambition. "I was concerned about one thing, which was making an absolutely great rock 'n' roll record," he recalls. "Whatever happens after that I don't have control over."

He introduced the song to the band at a rehearsal in January 1974. They were set up in the garage outside bassist Garry Tallent's father's place near Asbury Park. It was cold out there, the musicians wore sweaters, coats, and hats to ward off the chill, but the new song cut through the frosty air. Tallent clocked it immediately: "I just thought, *Oh, that's a good one. That's a keeper, really.*"

They ran through it a few times, Bruce explaining the song's pace and feel, slowing down to play the dozen or so chord changes in the bridge section.

"I think we had the song, or the bones of the song, and I was interested at first in getting the sound right," says Bruce. "So we went up and recorded the song with very few lyrics. And because we didn't really know how to get the sound we wanted, it took us a long time."

He eventually got it to the point where the music felt right, the simple chords on the verse contrasting with the head-spinning changes in the bridge, the tension building with every upward step, then rocketing downward again, only to speed off into the final verse.

We gotta live with the sadness.
Drive to this madness
Oh burnin' off the radio.
Oh well maybe someday girl I'll get us somewhere.
We'll get to that place we really wanna go
And we'll walk in the sun ...

The darkness was still there, along with the doubt and fear.

"I was a romantic at heart, you know," Bruce says. "So a dark romantic, I guess."

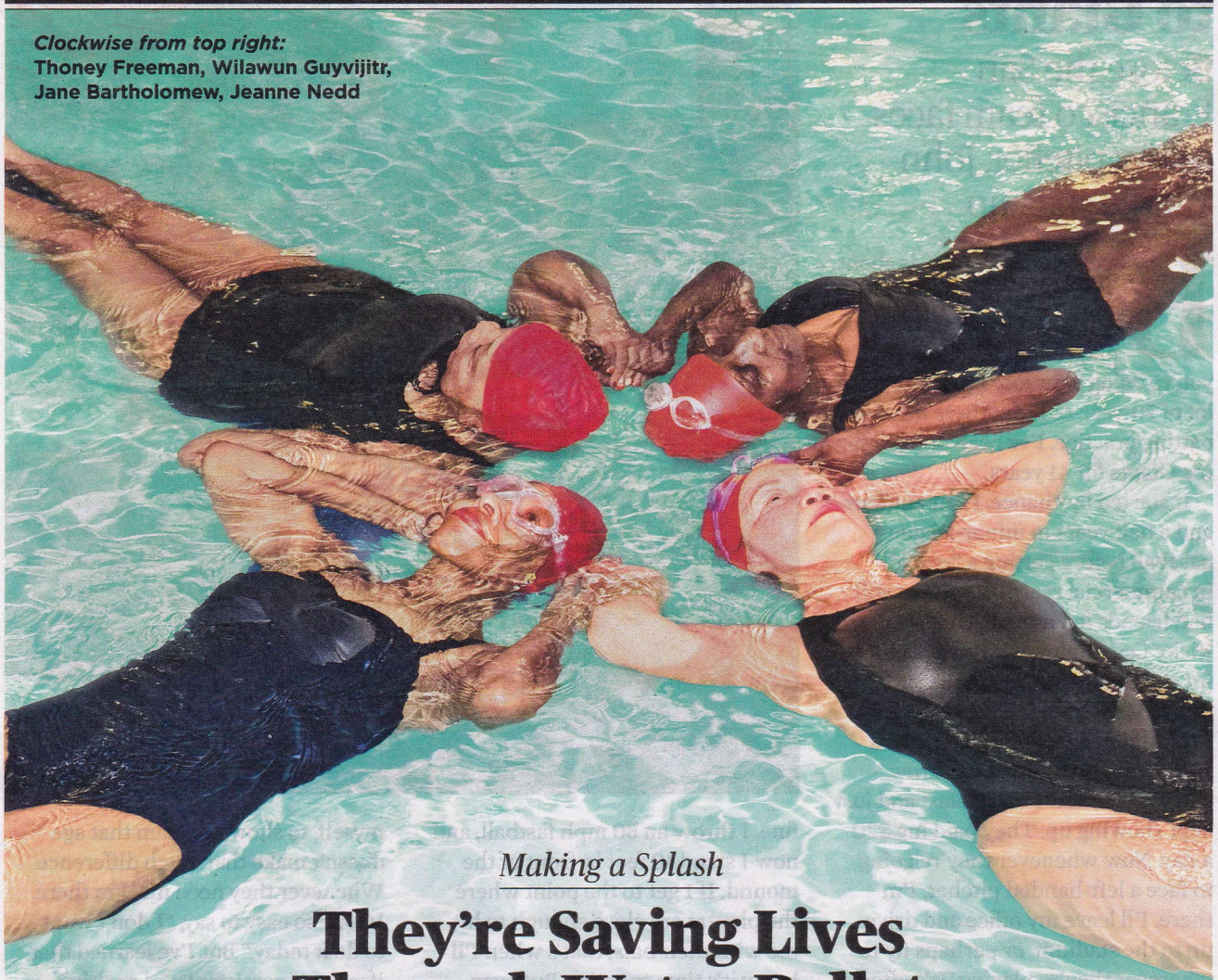
While work on the instrumental track went on for weeks, it still didn't rival Bruce's laboring over the lyrics. He had always put energy into his narratives, but the pressure he felt to get "Born to Run" exactly right pushed him to a whole other level of perfectionism, determined to get every word, every nuance, every syllable flawless. Sometimes he'd be in the midst of a take, sing a few lines of a verse, shake it off, then take his notebook to a folding chair. He'd find a pen, open the book, look at the page, and just ... think. He'd be there for a while. An hour, two hours, maybe more. Meanwhile in the control room, Appel would be at his place at the board, recording engineer Louis Lahav in his. Impatience was not an option.

"There was a certain amount of self-punishment and self-thrashing for no good reason except for that was the only way I knew how to do it," Bruce explains now. "I didn't know how to do it some other way, so everybody got stuck with it."

Still, for all that pressure to create, Bruce says he knew he was realizing the life he'd set out to have when he was 14 years old. "All I know is, hey, I'm on the road, I got a great band. We're having the time of our lives. I'm not working 9 to 5, and I'm traveling around, staying in places that are nicer than my apartment. We're meeting (CONTINUED ON PAGE 72)

REAL/PEOPLE

Inspiring stories of friends and neighbors, in their own words



Clockwise from top right:
Thoney Freeman, Wilawun Guyvijitr, Jane Bartholomew, Jeanne Nedd

Making a Splash

They're Saving Lives Through Water Ballet

The Harlem Honeys and Bears spread the gospel of safety while swimming in sync

FOR MOST OF her life, Jeanne Nedd, 82, didn't know how to swim. Then, at 64, she signed up for lessons. Now Nedd, shown at top left, is a dedicated member of her teacher's synchronized swimming troupe, the Harlem Honeys and Bears.

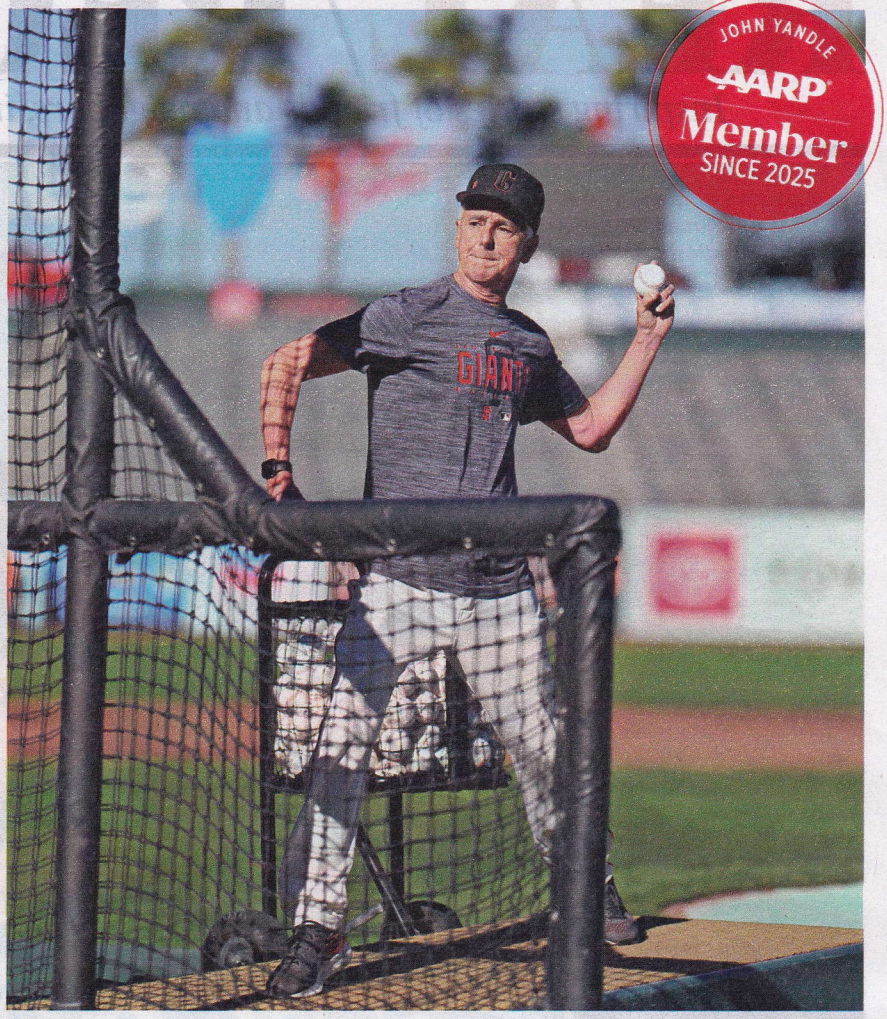
The New York City team—ranging in age from 55 to 91—has fun while on a serious mission: improving water safety in their community. Because of racial segregation of public pools before the '60s, many older Black Americans missed a childhood chance to learn to swim and therefore couldn't teach their kids. The group runs swimming lessons in Harlem for people 50 and older.

"We're here to change the story," says LeRoi Whethers, 74, a retired teacher who joined the squad 15 years ago. "Most of the folks on the team didn't learn to swim until they were 50, 60 or older. If we can do this, anyone can." —*David Hochman*

PHOTOGRAPH BY DOLLY FAIBYSHEV

At 70, He Pitches to Giants

Before the San Francisco team faces a lefty pitcher, John Yandle suits up



BATTING PRACTICE is about accuracy, not strategy. If you can throw strikes that the players can hit hard, then you're doing your job. There are not a lot of 70-year-olds out there throwing batting practice. I've been doing it for the Giants for 41 years.

It started by chance. I'd spent four and a half years in minor-league baseball before getting a "real job" in commercial real estate. But I still had friends in baseball. One was Ricky Lee Adams, who was playing for the Giants. While I was visiting him at Candlestick Park in 1985, some of the coaches said they had sore arms and asked if I'd throw batting practice. I had a blast and just kept showing up. They paid me $20 a day. Now whenever they're going to face a left-handed pitcher, I'm there. I'll leave my office and drive up to the stadium, or perhaps fly to wherever they're playing. It's often very last-minute. After the batters warm up, they'll ask me to hurl specific pitches at them in the batting cage. That's my favorite part. Giants slugger Barry Bonds would ask for curveballs, sliders and changeups. He worked harder than anybody else. It's an experience I'll never forget.

To stay ready, I work out in the offseason, doing bodywork, plyometrics, yoga—just keeping active. The funny thing is that if I go out and weed in the backyard, I can barely stand up the next day. But I can throw for four days in a row and be fine. I throw an 80 mph fastball, and now I stand 10 feet in front of the mound. If I get to the point where the players are close enough to hit me with their bats, that's when I'll know it's time to retire. But even then, I'll still show up for the Giants. They've become like family to me. Maybe I'll sell cotton candy.

I don't take any of this for granted. Every year, I feel that I have to prove myself, to show the team that age doesn't make that much difference. Whenever they need me, I'm there. It'd be so easy to say, "I don't want to do it today." But I've learned that if you are persistent and positive, you can surprise yourself. *—As told to Andrea Atkins*

Real estate executive John Yandle, 70, lives in Menlo Park, California. He is a father of three and the owner of three World Series rings.

Courtesy San Francisco Giants

Battling Back From a Cougar Attack

When an animal pounced, Keri Bergere's friends rushed to save her

ANNIE BILOTTA: Five of us were doing a training bike ride on a forest trail near Fall City, Washington, last year when a cougar appeared and pulled my friend Keri off her bike.

Aune Tietz: I was the first to get to Keri. I started yelling, "Cougar!"

Tisch Schmidt-Williams: Erica and I were biking up ahead and heard screams and turned around.

Erica Wolf: My 911 call kept dropping. Annie and Aune were already battling the cougar, which had its mouth locked around Keri's face.

Keri Bergere: His one tooth had sunk into my temple, and another tooth was up under my chin. The pain was searing, but I wasn't giving up. I stuck my fingers in his eyeball and up his nose.

Aune: I'll never forget the animal's determined stare in that moment.

Annie: I went straight for the cougar's neck; it was like choking a rock. Same thing when I tried prying open its jaw—nothing. I grabbed a paw.

Tisch: I found a big rock and hit the cougar's ribs with it 20 or 30 times, with no effect. Then I pointed out an even bigger rock near Aune.

Aune: It was a delicate situation. I had to drop this melon-size boulder near Keri's head. I dropped it multiple times from a squatting position. It wore me out but I kept thinking, *You're not taking my friend from me.*

Keri: After about 10 minutes, the cat cinched down and started crushing my bones. He pushed my nose and mouth into the dirt, and I started suffocating. Then there was a moment.

Annie: It was like a miracle. The animal relaxed its bite long enough for Keri to scramble away.

Erica: We used my bike to pin the cougar down, but it was still battling. Aune finally reached 911.

Annie: We're all small women. A couple of us are 5-2. We all stood on Erica's bike and waited 30 minutes until Fish & Wildlife came with a gun to dispose of the cougar.

Keri: These women saved my life. They refused to let me die. I spent nine hours in surgery the next day and five days in the hospital. My face continues to be numb.

Tisch: Somehow the rest of us escaped with only minor scratches. But the experience affected us all.

Annie: I don't have that carefree feeling in nature I used to have, but maybe that's a good thing.

Aune: If I'm heading into nature now, I'm going with a knife, bear spray, a first aid kit and at least four people.

Erica: I really feel fearless now. Recently, a big dude in a giant truck tried bullying me out of a parking spot, but I didn't back down. He was shocked and drove off.

Aune: In a weird way, I'm glad this happened at this point in my life. In my 20s, I was wild. The calm that comes with age helped me for sure.

Keri: I feel like I should get "resilience" tattooed. Some people might think I'm an old lady, but honestly, I feel like a total badass. —*As told to David Hochman*

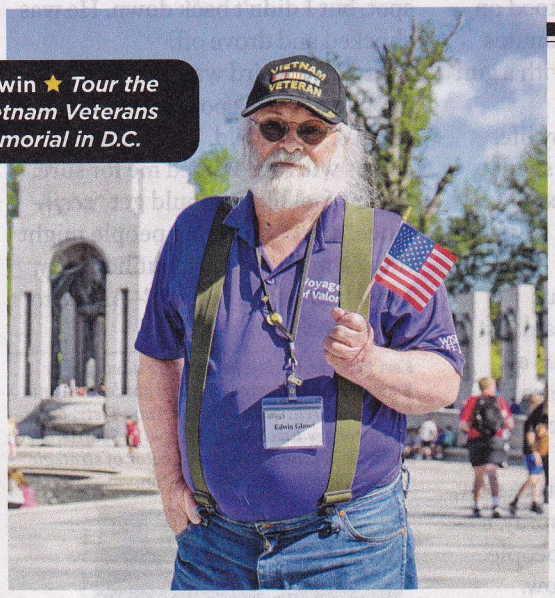
Keri Bergere, 61, is a health care advocate in Kenmore, Washington. Retired gardener Annie Bilotta, 65, real estate broker Aune Tietz, 60, and attorney Erica Wolf, 52, live in Seattle. Tisch Schmidt-Williams, 59, is a director of strategic sales in North Bend, Washington.

From left, **Bilotta, Schmidt-Williams, Bergere, Wolf and Tietz;** ***above right,*** **cougar under bike**

Courtesy Annie Bilotta

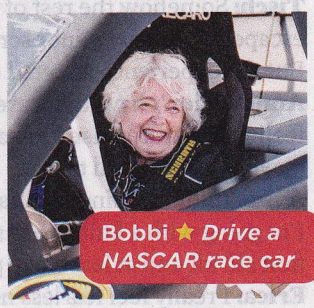
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHONA KASINGER

Your AARP®



Edwin ★ *Tour the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in D.C.*

Peggy ★ *See the monarch butterfly migration in Mexico*



Bobbi ★ *Drive a NASCAR race car*

Making Wishes Come True

An AARP charitable affiliate helps older Americans realize their dreams

EDWIN GLASER, 77, paused in front of a black granite panel at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Then he turned to his 17-year-old granddaughter, who had accompanied him to this spot he considers sacred.

"I think the monument shows what we paid," said Glaser as the two regarded the wall engraved with the names of more than 58,000 service members who died in the war. "It's amazing how many people didn't get to have a 17-year-old granddaughter."

Glaser was one of 16 Vietnam-era veterans from Wyoming invited in May by Wish of a Lifetime From AARP to fulfill a long-held desire to visit the memorial.

To learn more, go to wishofalifetime.org or scan this code.

Since its founding in 2008, Wish of a Lifetime has helped thousands of older Americans achieve their dreams—including sending a veteran to Nashville to record his original song, reuniting a 100-year-old Holocaust survivor with her sister and helping a Pearl Harbor survivor return to Hawaii to honor his crew members who lost their lives in the attack. Others have experienced thrills like parachuting out of an airplane, scuba diving and driving a NASCAR race car.

"Everybody can relate to dreams fulfilled but also dreams that go unfulfilled," says Tom Wagenlander, Wish of a Lifetime's vice president and executive director. "We believe that dreams shouldn't have an expiration date."

This year, the AARP affiliate will have granted its 3,000th wish since its creation. "I think we granted three wishes the first year, and we're now granting close to 300 [annually]," Wagenlander says.

The hope for these experiences is to renew a sense of purpose in older adults and inspire them. "These are desires that may have been held on to for the majority of someone's life, so they tend to be really impactful, meaningful and also unique," Wagenlander says.

Most wishes are about renewing and celebrating passions, connecting or reconnecting with loved ones, commemorating service and fulfilling lifelong dreams.

Ophelia Lee's wish was something she'd held on to for most of her life: honoring her father for his service during World War II and all the sacrifices he made for her and her siblings. "He wanted the best for us, even if he didn't get it," Lee, 74, says.

In October 2022, Wish of a Lifetime hosted Lee's visit to Washington, D.C., to pay tribute to her father at the World War II Memorial. When she returned home, she started volunteering with Wish of a Lifetime. She gives presentations in the Atlanta area and leads a Cupid Crew every year that distributes Valentine's Day roses to older adults who might otherwise have been forgotten on that day. Volunteers delivered about 300,000 roses and cards across America in February.

Visit wishofalifetime.org to read more inspirational stories and find out how you can help someone realize their special wish. —*Elise Ceyral*

Clockwise from left: Chris Ferenzi Photography/Courtesy Wish of a Lifetime From AARP; Sarabeth Soule/Courtesy Wish of a Lifetime From AARP; Rachel Tucker/Pikes Peak International Raceway/Courtesy Wish of a Lifetime From AARP

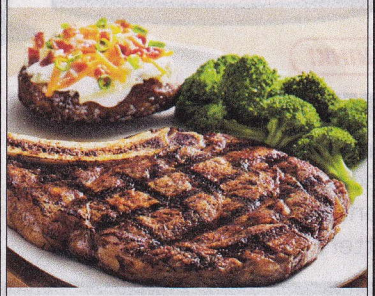
DEALS AND DISCOUNTS JUST FOR AARP MEMBERS

Vision Discounts

Members and their families enjoy exclusive savings on eyewear at Target Optical, LensCrafters and Visionworks.

Restaurants

Up to 15% off at Denny's and 10% off at Outback Steakhouse, Carrabba's Italian Grill and Bonefish Grill, plus your favorite local spots



Car Rentals

Up to 35% off base rates when you choose Pay Now at reservation, or up to 30% off with Pay Later at Avis and Budget.

Walmart+

$40 off a Walmart+ annual membership, which includes free same-day delivery and free shipping with no order minimum.

To see all your member benefits, go to aarp.org/ourbenefits or scan this code.

Illustration by Rob Dobi; Deals and Discounts from top: Getty Images; Courtesy Bonefish Grill

HOW WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOU

AARP TAKES ON AGE BIAS

WHEN the company where Geovani Barraza had worked for 21 years announced layoffs, he wrestled with a fear that many older workers encounter: age discrimination. Barraza, then 51, interviewed for months without success. Then he signed up for AARP Foundation's Back to Work 50+ program. With our support, he found a new job.

Along with helping older Americans find employment, we're championing stronger laws and fighting in the courts against age discrimination.

Here are some examples:

▶ **Advocating on Capitol Hill.** AARP recently endorsed the bipartisan Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (POWADA) of 2025. The bill would restore protections for older workers lost after a 2009 Supreme Court ruling that made it more difficult to prove claims of illegal bias in the workplace.

▶ **Working with employers.** AARP is engaging with hundreds of employers to help them build strong multigenerational workplaces that value experienced workers.

▶ **Fighting outdated stereotypes.** The Disrupt Aging Collection, a collaboration between AARP and Getty Images, provides photography that authentically reflects how older people live today.

▶ **Helping where you live.** The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities works with leaders and residents to enable towns, cities and states to be more livable and age-friendly for people of all ages, particularly older adults.

▶ **Seeking better health options.** We're piloting a program at universities that aims to combat ageism among future health care professionals, and we're collaborating with hospitals on research to improve the quality of care older adults receive.

▶ **Advancing new technology.** Each year, the AgeTech Collaborative from AARP sorts through hundreds of new products and services designed to help make aging easier, then provides support for the most promising ones to bring them to consumers faster.

▶ **Taking on illegal age bias in court.** AARP Foundation lawyers are fighting discrimination that violates federal protections for older workers, helping people get or retain jobs and benefits.

AARP will continue to push for change and support older adults facing discrimination. Visit aarp.org/agediscrimination to learn more.

—Carly Roszkowski, AARP vice president of financial resilience programming

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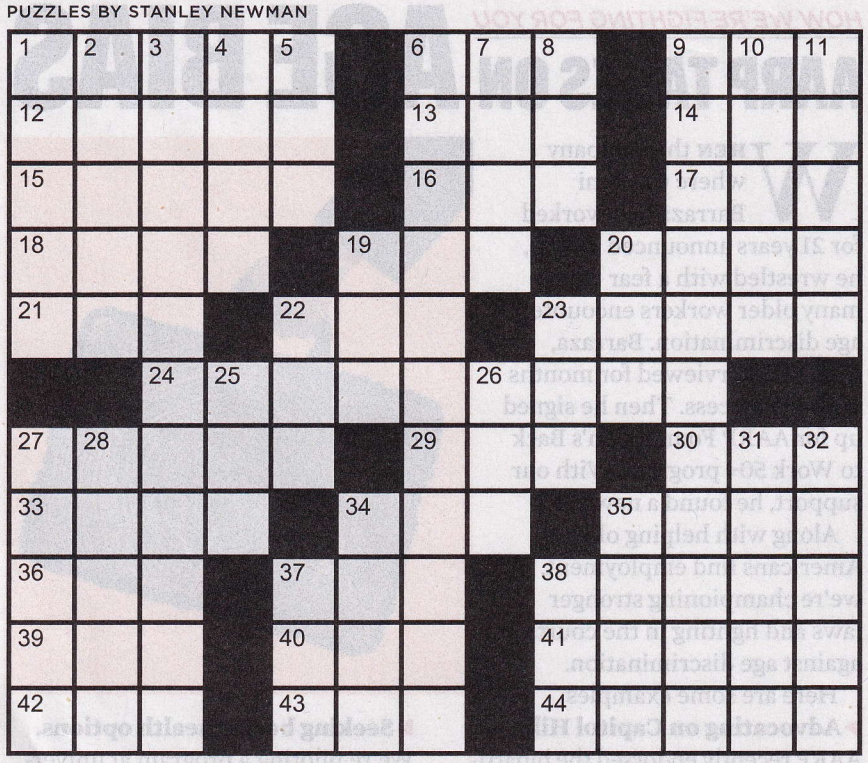
PUZZLES BY STANLEY NEWMAN



CROSSWORD

Falling Leaves

ACROSS

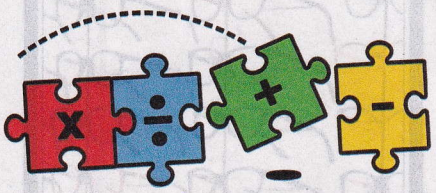
1 Hassle
6 Historical period
9 Luggage label
12 Wishes
13 Recent
14 Be in the red
15 Pot starters
16 ___ Miss (football powerhouse)
17 Block
18 Roll in the kitchen
19 Believe, in a sense
20 Hair treatment
21 To and ___
22 Glutton
23 Walks through water
24 Alaska city with a misleading name
27 Problem
29 Biblical vessel
30 Sucker
33 Little drink
34 Zoom
35 Bring aboard
36 Once around a track
37 Unhappy shout
38 Flat hat
39 Galoot
40 Proudly affirm
41 "_____ you glad?"
42 Guys
43 Pub beverage
44 At present

DOWN

1 Wheat harvest waste
2 Pay tribute to
3 ... YOUR _____ (stay flexible)
4 Fisherman's spool
5 Shape of a dollar sign
6 ... WELL _____ (don't press your luck)
7 Count (on)
8 Impress greatly
9 ... MUCH _____ (aren't very good)
10 In the know
11 Microbes
19 Tiny piece
20 Buddy
22 Lead-in to text or natal
23 General Tso's pan
25 No longer stylish
26 Get all nosy
27 World religion
28 Form
31 Sports venue
32 Minor
34 Duck or turkey
35 Tubular sandwich
37 Sort of snake
38 Louisville Slugger

NUMBER FUN

ALL FOR ONE



Place each of the mathematical signs +, -, × and ÷ exactly once in the four spaces so that the result is 1 when you perform calculations from left to right. (Ignore the order of operations you may have learned in school.)

6 ◯ 6 ◯ 6 ◯ 6 ◯ 6 = 1

THINK!

SPELLING TEST

Only one common uncapitalized word in English contains the consecutive letters HCR. What is it?

WORDPLAY

NOTED NOUNS

The word **FEEDBAG** is spelled using only the names of musical notes from A through G. What two other common seven-letter nouns, one edible and the other totable, are spelled with musical notes?

Illustrations by Kyle Hilton

AARP.ORG/BRAINHEALTH
Up-to-date news, resources and tips on dementia and cognitive health

All puzzle solutions on page 73

AARP® | Auto Insurance from The Hartford

EXCLUSIVELY FOR AARP MEMBERS

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[1]In Texas, the Auto program is underwritten by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company through Hartford of the Southeast General Agency, Inc. Hartford Fire Insurance Company and its affiliates are not financially responsible for insurance products underwritten and issued by Redpoint County Mutual Insurance Company.

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*Based on customer experience reviews shared online at www.thehartford.com/aarp/car-insurance/reviews as of January 2024.

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PREDIABETES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

density, muscle mass and weight control.

→ BE GENEROUS WITH HEALTHY FATS: Fats give us the sensation of being satiated, which helps make a low-carb diet achievable—even for a carboholic. Incorporate good fats like nuts, unsweetened nut butters, seeds, avocados and olive oil into your diet. Avoid unhealthy fats like hydrogenated seed oils and fried foods.

→ EAT YOUR VEGGIES: Fill up on anything green, and enjoy reasonable amounts of cauliflower, tomatoes, eggplants, mushrooms, bell peppers, garlic and onions. Avoid starchy, high-carb culprits like corn and potatoes.

→ DON'T DRINK YOUR FRUITS: Fruit juices can be high in carbs, but judicious amounts of fruit in their whole form (with their natural fibers) can fit into a low-carb diet.

→ MAKE YOUR OWN TRADE-OFFS: You are the boss of how you want to spend your daily 100-gram carb budget. While a single glazed cinnamon roll (127 grams of carbs) will bankrupt you, an occasional appetizer-size serving of pasta will not. Many options can be replaced with other choices and occasional treats. For example, a single slice of multigrain sandwich bread contains roughly 12 grams of carbs. And how many carbs are in half a bottle of wine? Roughly 12 grams. Look how much fun it is being your own boss!

→ EAT AT HOME MORE: Cooking for yourself gives you control over your carb intake and portion size.

→ UNLEASH THE FLAVORS: Make every bite life-affirming by incorporating fresh herbs, spices, garlic, ginger, shallots, chiles, citrus zest and the like. They add brightness and are virtually carb- and calorie-free. Ditto for fish sauce, anchovies, harissa, Dijon mustard, balsamic vinegar, miso paste and Parmigiano-Reggiano, which add depth of flavor. ■

Bob Blumer is a former Food Network host. His most recent cookbook is Flavorbomb: A Rogue Guide to Making Everything Taste Better.

SHOPPING ADVENTURE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51

$3, chairs for $15, and glassware and other lightly used home products for just a few bucks apiece. Items are sold as is and are final sale, but the cashier said prices are negotiable.

▶ **How to find them:** Visit the website remixmarket.com or search online for "architectural salvage."

▶ **Special tips:** Many products are dusty or damaged, so be ready to use some elbow grease.

MONSTER FLEA MARKETS

I can't think of a better place to go bargain hunting than outdoor megamarkets. Brimfield Antique Flea Market in Massachusetts is one of my favorites. Billed as America's largest outdoor antique show, it brings together thousands of vendors selling everything from used tools to fancy furniture and rugs.

I make a pilgrimage at least once a year to the market, which runs in May, July and September. My house is filled with Brimfield bargains, including my $400 kitchen table, made from a zinc tabletop welded onto an antique wrought-iron base, and my collection of antique kitchen and mail scales, bought for no more than $15 apiece.

Other monster fleas include 127 Yard Sale, which spans six states and takes place in August; the monthly First Monday in Canton, Texas; and Scott Antique Markets in Atlanta (in May) and Columbus, Ohio (in November).

▶ **How to find them:** Query Gemini, Perplexity, or another AI chatbot by typing in "largest flea markets near me" or, if you're in the mood for a road trip, "largest flea markets in the U.S."

▶ **Special tips:** Arrive early to get a parking spot. Bring empty bags for carrying your purchases, comfortable walking shoes and lots of cash. Don't be shy about haggling, especially on the final day, when sellers are eyeballing unsold items they'd have to haul back home. ■

Lisa Lee Freeman, who writes the "Live Well for Less" column in the AARP Bulletin, *was formerly editor-in-chief of* ShopSmart *magazine from* Consumer Reports.

BORN TO RUN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 64

girls. You know, I felt like I was as good as anybody out there ... but I was just taking it a day at a time."

MEANWHILE, THE nation in 1974 spun crazily toward some kind of doom. *We've gotta get out while we're young*, Bruce sang, and the urgency in his voice was echoed by every note and drum stroke, the hard edge in the guitar, the cry of the organ, the growl and wail of the saxophone.

Finally the song felt finished.

Now it was August, right around the time of President Nixon's resignation. The denouement of the Watergate scandal—what the freshly anointed President Gerald Ford called our long national nightmare—lifted at least a part of the nation's psychic burden. Suddenly the breeze carried a sense of new beginnings. A propitious time to move forward. They made a final mix of "Born to Run" and dubbed it onto a cassette.

Appel and Bruce walked from the manager's midtown office up to the CBS building to play it for a record executive with their label. Bruce decided to wait in the lobby downstairs while Appel carried the tape up to the executive floor. When Appel returned to the lobby, he gave it to him straight: The music exec had only sort of listened as he took multiple phone calls, then said he hadn't been able to absorb it. Fifty years later, Bruce is generous in his assessment of the executive's response.

"I guess it wasn't an easy song to absorb when you first heard it," he says. "Now people have heard it a thousand times, so it all sounds perfectly natural, right? But at first people said it sounded noisy."

Still, as far as Appel was concerned, Bruce Springsteen shouldn't have to take no from anybody. A new plan of attack revealed itself. It would require them to take a leap, and to risk aggravating the very executives who could help, or hinder, them. A career-sized risk, in other words. With Bruce's record con-

tract already in jeopardy, news of an unauthorized leak from a nonexistent future album might well have spurred the company to cut the rocker loose. But that possibility didn't trouble Appel. The only question in his mind was how quickly he could get it done.

The manager made a list of all the radio DJs who'd played Bruce's records, who'd had him on the air and/or attended his shows and/or professed their adoration for him. He arranged to make several dozen duplicates of the "Born to Run" master tape and wrote a cover letter for radio programmers and disc jockeys so they knew exactly what it was and why they had been chosen to play the song on their air.

Word of the new song sifted across town and then to Bruce-friendly stations in dozens of other cities. "We had stations all over the country," says Appel. "Primary, secondary, tertiary markets, it didn't matter; we had the nation covered."

The plan worked. He quickly began to hear from the Columbia executive floor, whose occupants wanted to know what the hell Appel thought he was doing. But he was happy to weather the abuse. Now, at last, they were ready to listen.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Partly as a result of Appel's audacious marketing effort, Springsteen and his band finally received financial backing from their label to record the *Born to Run* album. After a year of intense studio work, the album was released in August 1975 to massive acclaim, with *Billboard* declaring the "Born to Run" track a "monster song with a piledriver arrangement ... simply one of the best rock anthems to individual freedom ever created." ■

Peter Ames Carlin is the author of several books, including The Name of This Band Is R.E.M., Sonic Boom: The Impossible Rise of Warner Bros. Records *and* Bruce, *a biography of Springsteen. Carlin has also been a freelance journalist, a senior writer at* People *and a television columnist and feature writer at* The Oregonian. *A regular speaker on music, writing and popular culture, he lives in Seattle.*

Adapted from Tonight in Jungleland: The Making of Born to Run *by Peter Ames Carlin, to be published by Doubleday on August 5, 2025. Copyright © 2025 by Peter Ames Carlin.*

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SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 70

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Charlize Theron

(AUGUST 7): In 2004, Theron became the first South African to win an acting Oscar (best actress for *Monster*). She remains a draw, including in popcorn movies such as 2020's *The Old Guard* and this year's sequel.

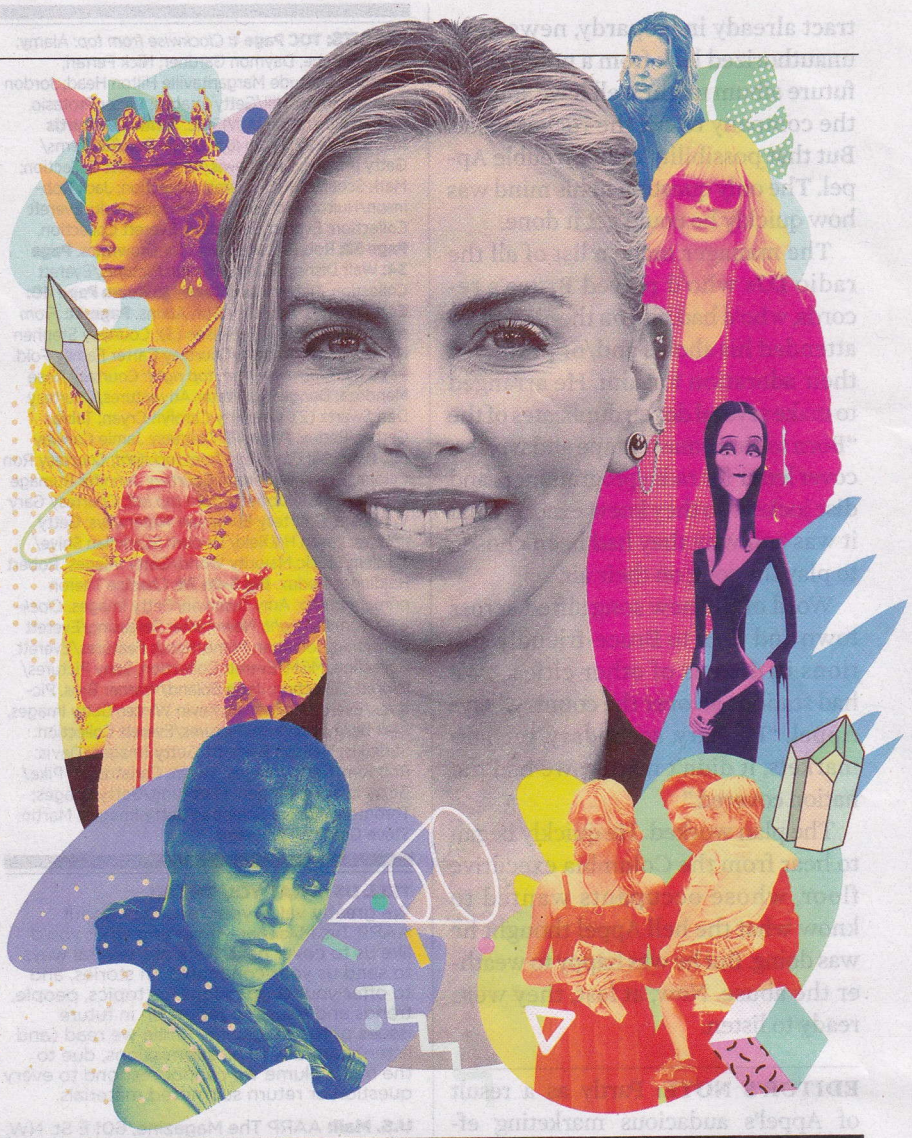
ON HER TOES: Theron trained as a ballet dancer. After an injury ended that path, she tried acting. Her first role was in 1995's *Children of the Corn III: Urban Harvest.*

★ 3 ★
Oscar nominations *(Monster, North Country, Bombshell)*

CHARITY: Since 2007, the Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Project has raised millions to help African youth.

MUSIC-LOVING MOM: In 2020, Theron inducted Depeche Mode into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. She has been spotted with her two kids at Dua Lipa and Taylor Swift concerts.

WORDS OF WISDOM: "It's important to take time for myself," Theron told *Elle UK* this year. "Silence can feel like a vacation." —*Whitney Matheson*



MORE MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS

Jason Sudeikis
SEPTEMBER 18
Ted Lasso **actor announced he is reprising the beloved character in a new season on Apple TV+.**

Viola Davis
AUGUST 11
Actor received the Cecil B. DeMille Award in 2025 for her contributions to entertainment.

Shania Twain
AUGUST 28
Singer surprised fans with a recurring role on the recent ABC medical drama *Doctor Odyssey.*

Scottie Pippen
SEPTEMBER 25
Retired basketball star is now a famous fan—of hoops-playing sons Scotty and Justin.

Billy Bob Thornton
AUGUST 4
Landman **star has released more than 20 albums of music since 2001.**

Steve Martin
AUGUST 14
Comedic actor is returning for the fifth season of Hulu hit *Only Murders in the Building.*

Photo credits and information on page 73

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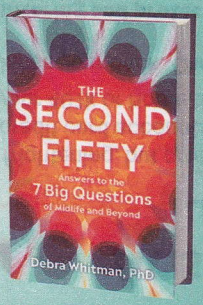

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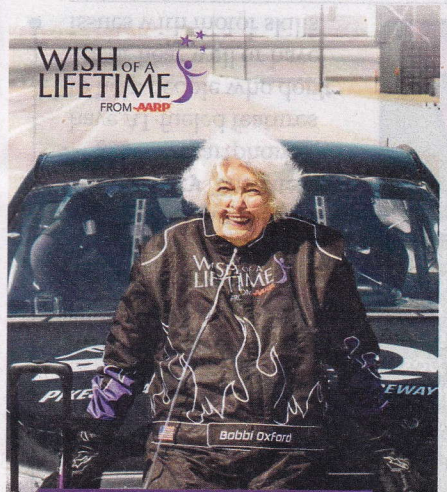

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